

NEW

HISTORY
WAR

BATTLE OF WATERLOO



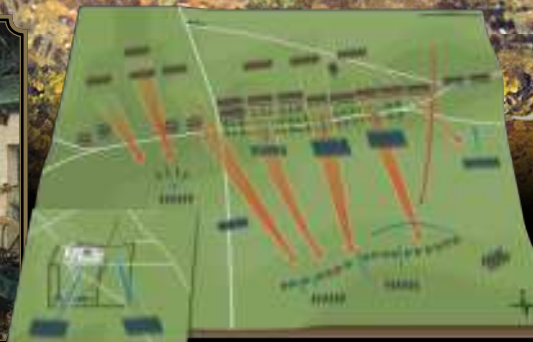
OUTLAW EMPEROR

Napoleon's desperate
gamble to regain
the throne

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EDITION



The Allied offensive ★ Influential military heroes ★ Secrets of the battlefield

HISTORY WAR

BATTLE *of* WATERLOO



On 20 March 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte stepped onto Parisian soil once again following his escape from exile on the island of Elba. The calculated move came from a desire to regain the hearts and minds of his fellow Frenchmen and the power that such admiration wielded. In one last great gamble, Napoleon and his armies set their sights on depleting the Seventh Coalition's forces and achieving a decisive victory in the Belgian village of Waterloo. Over the following pages, meet the Duke of Wellington, Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher and the military heroes who fought for the ultimate prize, step into the battles for Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte and find out how the Battle of Waterloo cost Napoleon everything.

「 FUTURE 」

BATTLE OF WATERLOO

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Printed in the UK

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9001

History of War Battle of Waterloo Fourth Edition (HWB4360)

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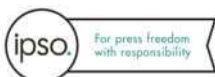
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Part of the

HISTORY of WAR

bookazine series™





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THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO

WITH EUROPE ONCE AGAIN PLUNGED
INTO WAR BY NAPOLEON'S RETURN,
ITS FATE WOULD COME DOWN TO ONE
FINAL CLASH OF ARMS AND A SERIES
OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

NAPOLEON RETURNS TO FRANCE

20 MARCH 1815
CÔTE D'AZUR, FRANCE

VIENNA DECLARATION

13 MARCH 1815 -
VIENNA, AUSTRIA

While Napoleon is making his way to France, the Allied forces that will soon once again be ranged against him are gathered at a congress in Vienna. Upon learning of his escape, they waste little time in developing a declaration that will declare Napoleon 'an enemy and disturber of the tranquillity of the world'.

The declaration commits military superpowers like Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia to mobilise their troops and wage war upon the former emperor until defeated. The wording of it permits no room for negotiations: 'He has deprived himself of the protection of the law and has manifested to the universe that there can be neither peace nor truce with him'.

As a consequence of this swift condemnation of Napoleon's disregard for the law, his force of 280,000 men will have to march against approximately 800,000 Allied soldiers led by nations determined to put a final end to his treachery.

4 APRIL 1814

NAPOLEON ESCAPES ELBA

26 FEBRUARY 1815 - ISLAND OF ELBA

Having fought his way up the ranks to reach the summit of supreme power, Napoleon was not a man lacking in courage and audacity. Both of these traits are stunningly displayed in his daring escape from Elba, a break out that will initiate further conflict in Europe.

Despite having vowed shortly after his arrival on the island that "I want to live from now on like a justice of the peace," and being under the constant watch of armed guards, Napoleon manages to slip past them, cleverly timing his escape for when the British and French ships will be out of the island's harbour.

Commandeering the French brig *Inconstant*, he sails for France with around 1,000 men. Upon his arrival, the soldiers sent to arrest him instantly fall to their knees and swear allegiance to him. Once again, Napoleon has outthought and outmanoeuvred his opponents.

■ General Thomas Picton reels in the saddle, struck by a lethal French musket ball after ordering a bayonet charge

NAPOLEON'S FIRST ABDICATION

4 APRIL 1814
PARIS, FRANCE

DUCHESS OF RICHMOND'S BALL

15 JUNE 1815 - BELGIUM

In what must seem like a rather surreal gathering given the situation, the Duchess of Richmond chooses to hold an evening ball on the night of 15 June in Brussels.

The reason she is present in the Belgian capital is due to her husband's role as the commander of a reserve force stationed in the city in the event of a French invasion, something the duchess is clearly fearful of when she asks Wellington if it is safe to host such an evening. Wellington's reply is typically calm: "Duchess, you may give your ball with the greatest safety, without fear of interruption."

With the lavish evening well under way, guests are beginning to take their seats for supper when Wellington receives an alarming dispatch from William II of the Netherlands alerting him to Napoleon's rapid advance across Belgium. Napoleon by this point has engaged the Prussians and forded the Sambre River, just 50 miles south of Brussels.

Wellington immediately discusses the situation with his fellow generals before the majority of the male guests at the ball bid their wives goodbye and scramble off to prepare for battle.



NAPOLEON INVADES BELGIUM

15 JUNE 1815
FRENCH-BELGIAN BORDER

■ As well as the main military powers, Spain, Sweden and Portugal also signed the declaration

VON GNEISENAU RALLIES PRUSSIANS

16/17 JUNE 1815
WAVRE, BELGIUM



■ If Napoleon had capitalised, von Blücher's defeat at Ligny could have been catastrophic for the Allies

NAPOLEON FAILS TO CRUSH THE PRUSSIANS

17 JUNE 1815 - WATERLOO

Having missed the chance to destroy Blücher's forces at Ligny due to a mix up between his generals, Napoleon compounds his error on the morning of 17 June by delaying the pursuit of his bedraggled foe.

Instead of setting off at sunset, Napoleon wanders about the French encampment at a leisurely pace, chatting to his troops. It isn't until around 11.30am that he finally decides to send General de Grouchy off with a contingent of 33,000 men to hunt down the Prussians.

This critical delay enables Blücher's troops to escape and reconvene at Wavre (thanks to General von Gneisenau's brilliant decision to rally them there). While de Grouchy makes up some ground, he also makes two costly errors in doing so. Not only does he mistake the Prussian rear-guard for the entire army (thus giving Napoleon the impression that their numbers are severely depleted), he then fails to catch them.



■ Many of the guests who attended the ball would fight in their dancing shoes the following morning



17 JUNE 1815

BATTLES OF QUATRE BRAS AND LIGNY

16 JUNE 1815 - BELGIUM

Having crossed the border into Belgium with 124,000 men of the Armée du Nord the day before, Napoleon intends to defeat the Prussians before moving against the British and preventing them from combining forces.

With Wellington's Allied army stationed at the crossroads of Quatre Bras, Napoleon detaches a section of his army under the guidance of Michel Ney, tasking the general with assaulting the British and taking the junction.

Having positioned his guns, Ney opens proceedings at around 2pm with an artillery bombardment before charging British lines. The French make a number of gains throughout the day but are forced to relinquish each one.

Napoleon launches the rest of his men at the bulk of the Prussian army at Ligny, which sees strongholds change hands several times. Despite both sides losing around 12,000 casualties, the French put the Prussians to flight.

■ The Battle of Quatre Bras cost the French around 4,000 men while the British lost almost 5,000



OPENING SALVO AT WATERLOO

11.30AM 18 JUNE 1815 - WATERLOO

Despite believing that "no force should be detached on the eve of battle," on the night of 17 June, Napoleon does just that when he sends a large chunk of his army off with de Grouchy. Yet while one uncharacteristic error under pressure is understandable, the fact that Napoleon then makes further calamitous mistakes is somewhat puzzling.

In marching to face Wellington at Waterloo, Napoleon is permitting his opponent to choose the site of battle, a location Wellington has scouted thoroughly, and that he knows provides natural cover and stone farmhouses that can be defended. Napoleon waits until the ground has sufficiently dried before moving artillery into position.

Instead of opening fire at sunrise (around 3.48am), Napoleon finally unleashes the opening shots of the engagement at a little after 11am, directing his guns at the walls of the farm of Hougoumont. Once Marshal Reille's artillery falls silent, Napoleon commands his brother, Jérôme, to lead 5,000 men in the initial assault on the heavily defended building.

■ It fell to Jérôme Bonaparte to lead the infantry assault on Hougoumont

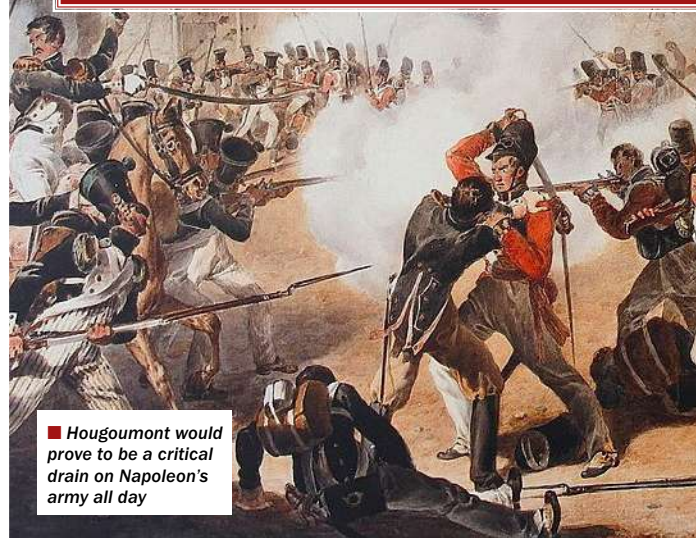
FRENCH OPEN THE GATES AT HOUGOUMONT

12.30PM 18 JUNE 1815 - HOUGOUMONT FARMHOUSE

With the 1,500 British and Hanoverian soldiers under the command of James Macdonell repelling their advances, the French lose heavy casualties, but Napoleon is adamant that the farmhouse has to be taken at all costs to dangerously expose the British right flank.

Pouring ever more men into the battle, the French numbers eventually begin to tell in the early afternoon as they force their way through the forbidding wooden gates. Wielding an axe, Sous-lieutenant Legros of the 2nd Light Infantry manages to press his hulking frame against the gates and pry them open. Spotting their chance, around 30 French troops storm the courtyard.

Macdonell and a group of officers (including his sergeant) cut their way through the crash of bodies and shut the gate, trapping enemy troops. In fierce hand-to-hand fighting, all but one of the French soldiers (said to be an 11-year-old drummer boy) are butchered.



■ Hougoumont would prove to be a critical drain on Napoleon's army all day

18 JUNE 1815

WELLINGTON ESTABLISHES A DEFENSIVE POSITION

18 JUNE 1815
WATERLOO

NAPOLEON ADVANCES ON WELLINGTON'S CENTRE

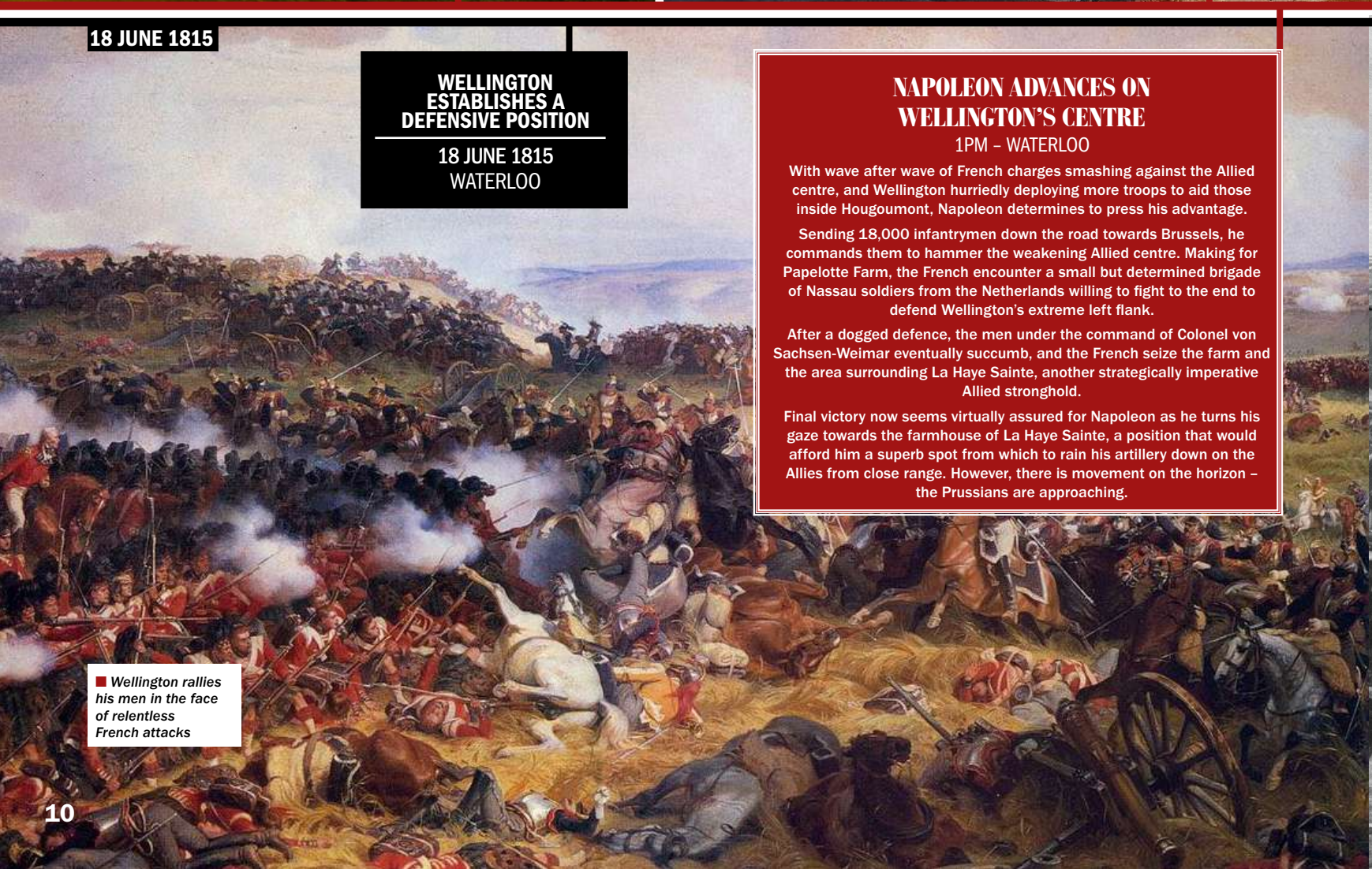
1PM - WATERLOO

With wave after wave of French charges smashing against the Allied centre, and Wellington hurriedly deploying more troops to aid those inside Hougoumont, Napoleon determines to press his advantage.


Sending 18,000 infantrymen down the road towards Brussels, he commands them to hammer the weakening Allied centre. Making for Papelotte Farm, the French encounter a small but determined brigade of Nassau soldiers from the Netherlands willing to fight to the end to defend Wellington's extreme left flank.

After a dogged defence, the men under the command of Colonel von Sachsen-Weimar eventually succumb, and the French seize the farm and the area surrounding La Haye Sainte, another strategically imperative Allied stronghold.

Final victory now seems virtually assured for Napoleon as he turns his gaze towards the farmhouse of La Haye Sainte, a position that would afford him a superb spot from which to rain his artillery down on the Allies from close range. However, there is movement on the horizon - the Prussians are approaching.



■ Wellington rallies his men in the face of relentless French attacks



■ Aware of how vital holding the farm is, Wellington hurries to the scene

WELLINGTON HURRIES TO LA HAYE SAINTE

14.20PM 18 JUNE 1815
WATERLOO

THE FIGHT FOR LA HAYE SAINTE

4PM – SOUTH OF ALLIED LINES

As their youthful comrades hold Plancenoit, d'Erlon's Corps begins the attack on La Haye Sainte, a violent tussle for a defensive position the Allies simply cannot afford to lose.

With the Allies inflicting heavy casualties on the French, d'Erlon presses on to hit the centre left of Wellington's ranks and surround the increasingly vulnerable farmhouse. Spotting the threat posed by d'Erlon's advance, the ferocious Thomas Picton boldly leads a bayonet charge to stem the wave, suffering a fatal gunshot wound to the head in the process.

This initial counterattack is followed up by cavalry charges under Lord Edward Somerset (who has his hat shot off as he rides) and William Ponsonby in a manoeuvre that halts d'Erlon's men, although Ponsonby is cut down by French lancers when his horse becomes mired in mud. Frustrated in his efforts to take the farm, Napoleon summons Michel Ney.

18 JUNE 1815


FRENCH CAVALRY ENGAGE BLÜCHER

3.30PM – PLANCENOIT, 5 MILES EAST OF WATERLOO


Having sent a cavalry detachment to ascertain the identity of the encroaching masses, Napoleon realises that his only hope of holding the Prussian's back lies in engaging them at Plancenoit, east of the main battle. Consequently, he orders General Guillaume Duhesme, commander of the Young Division, to occupy the village with his eight battalions and 24 guns.

Linking up with Georges Mouton, commander of the VI Infantry Corps, Duhesme rushes to position his men and prepare to hold the village, less than a kilometre from the French lines. As the first waves of Prussian troops reach the village, street fighting ensues, with every building having to be taken inch by inch.

Despite being outnumbered two to one, the more experienced French musketeers fight with distinction, often causing their less-seasoned adversaries to panic and fall back. The bloody struggle for the village rages all day.



■ Von Blücher marches towards Waterloo at the head of the Prussian army



■ Michel Ney personally leads a cavalry charge against the British centre

NEY TAKES LA HAYE SAINTE

6.15PM – SOUTH OF ALLIED LINES


At around 3pm, Ney leads two infantry brigades in yet another assault on the farmhouse but meets stiff resistance. Even so, the British dead and wounded are starting to pile up, and when Ney observes a large amount of enemy troops hobbling away, he assumes a full retreat has been ordered.

Hastily gathering around 5,000 heavily armoured cavalymen, Ney eschews the wisdom of utilising infantry and artillery support, and charges head-on at the British squares forming outside La Haye Sainte.

Keeping their discipline in the face of immense pressure, the British hold firm and rebuff Ney's thrust, shooting down a host of horsemen as they rush up the slopes below the British guns.

Banding the survivors together, Ney goes again in a second charge, but he is once again pushed back as the British artillerymen man their guns stoutly, and unleash an unrelenting volley of fire.

With the French riders' numbers swelling to 10,000, Ney takes charge of an infantry division, but still fails to make any significant gains. Even so, the British cannot hold forever, and Ney eventually takes the farm at around 6.15pm.



■ British cavalry return the favour in a fearsome charge towards the French guns

VICTORY!

8.30PM – WATERLOO

Having rolled his last dice and lost, Napoleon pays dearly for his gamble as the British continue to gun down his most talented men. With all momentum lost, the French stumble back as Wellington urges his soldiers forwards. At the same time, the Prussians – whose leader, Blücher, had vowed: "We must give air to the English army" – are now arriving from the east, meaning that Napoleon faces a two-pronged counter-attack. At one point he comes perilously close to being shot, only spared by Wellington commanding his riflemen to hold fire.

As cries of 'Save yourselves!' ripple through the flailing French ranks, Napoleon admits defeat to one of his officers: "The affair is over, we have lost the day. Let us be off." He then makes a quick but steady retreat, shielded by his loyal soldiers all the way.

As the evening draws on, Napoleon's carriage races for the sanctuary of France, but the fallen emperor's luck runs out as a company of Prussian fusiliers draw level. Desperate to avoid capture, Napoleon takes to his horse and flees while his carriage falls into the hands of Major von Keller.

18 JUNE 1815

FRENCH CHARGE HALTED

7.15PM – CENTRE OF ALLIED LINES

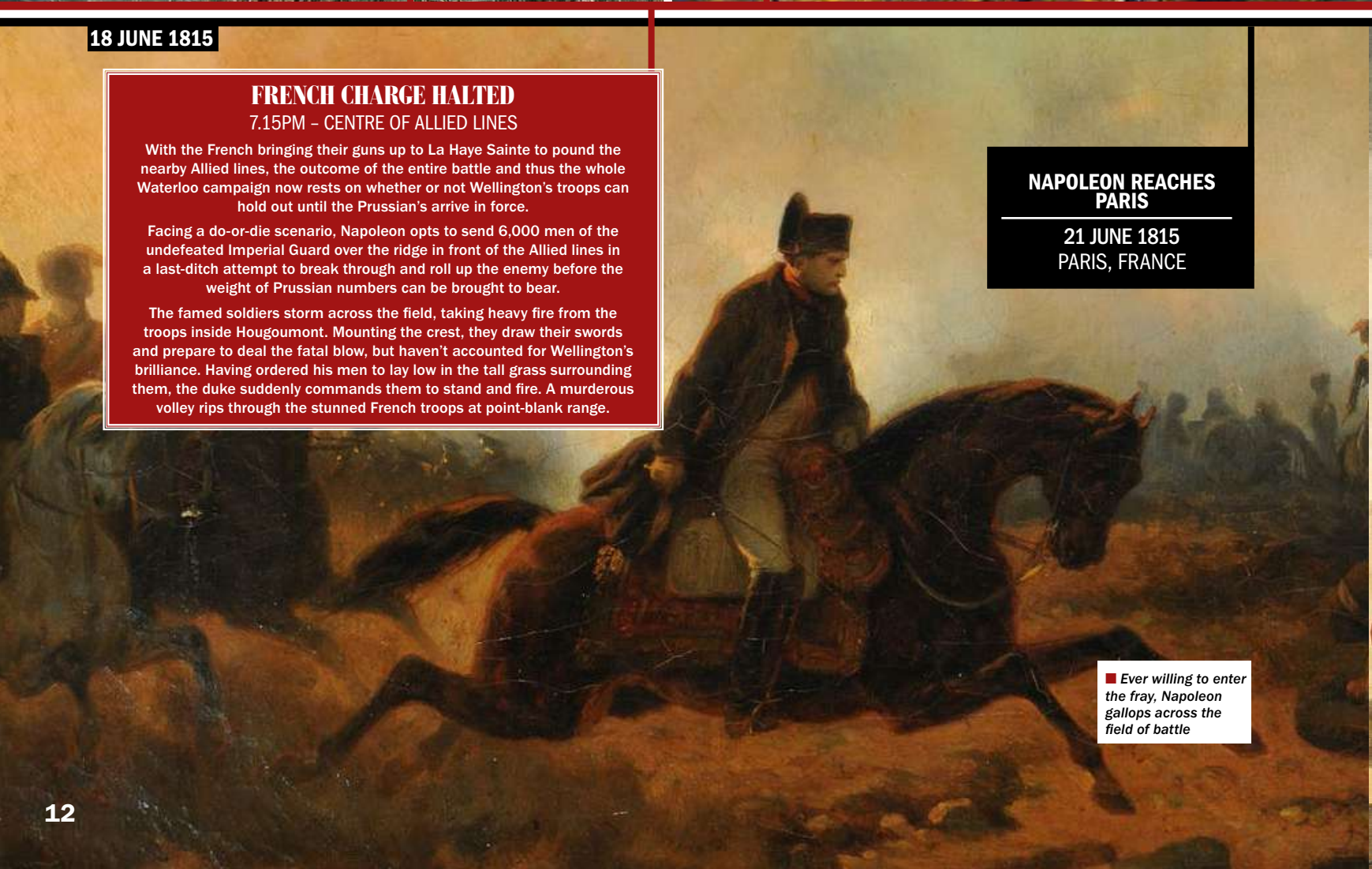
With the French bringing their guns up to La Haye Sainte to pound the nearby Allied lines, the outcome of the entire battle and thus the whole Waterloo campaign now rests on whether or not Wellington's troops can hold out until the Prussian's arrive in force.

Facing a do-or-die scenario, Napoleon opts to send 6,000 men of the undefeated Imperial Guard over the ridge in front of the Allied lines in a last-ditch attempt to break through and roll up the enemy before the weight of Prussian numbers can be brought to bear.

The famed soldiers storm across the field, taking heavy fire from the troops inside Hougomont. Mounting the crest, they draw their swords and prepare to deal the fatal blow, but haven't accounted for Wellington's brilliance. Having ordered his men to lay low in the tall grass surrounding them, the duke suddenly commands them to stand and fire. A murderous volley rips through the stunned French troops at point-blank range.

NAPOLEON REACHES PARIS

21 JUNE 1815
PARIS, FRANCE



■ Ever willing to enter the fray, Napoleon gallops across the field of battle



THE EMPEROR ABDICATES ONCE MORE

22 JUNE 1815
PARIS, FRANCE

LOUIS XVIII ENTERS PARIS

8 July 1815
PARIS, FRANCE

■ By the time of the treaty, King Louis XVIII had already been back on his throne for five months



TREATY OF PARIS

20 NOVEMBER 1815 - PARIS, FRANCE

Confident that any threat posed by Napoleon is now thoroughly extinguished, the Allies' next move is to impose the harsh terms of the Treaty of Paris on the once-again Bourbon state of France.

As reparations for the costs of the war, France is forced to pay 700 million Francs to the Allied nations, and suffer the indignity of seeing its borders cut back to their 1790 level. On top of this, France also has to bear the huge cost of any defensive positions that the coalition nations deem necessary to build, and permit the presence of 150,000 foreign troops on its soil, something else for which France is financially responsible under the terms of the treaty.

The passionate, widespread support for Napoleon upon his return to France from Elba plays a key part in the Allies' desire to put the country firmly back in its place and serve a final reminder that the man who once dominated Europe is no longer a force to be reckoned with.

20 NOVEMBER 1815

NAPOLEON RETURNS TO EXILE

15 OCTOBER 1815 - ISLAND OF ST HELENA

Reaching Paris on 21 June, Napoleon faces two choices: declare a dictatorship and snatch control of the remnants of the French army, or concede that his audacious bid to reclaim his throne and force the Allies to the negotiating table has failed. Fortunately for the war-weary people of France, Napoleon chooses to abdicate in favour of his beloved son, Napoleon II.

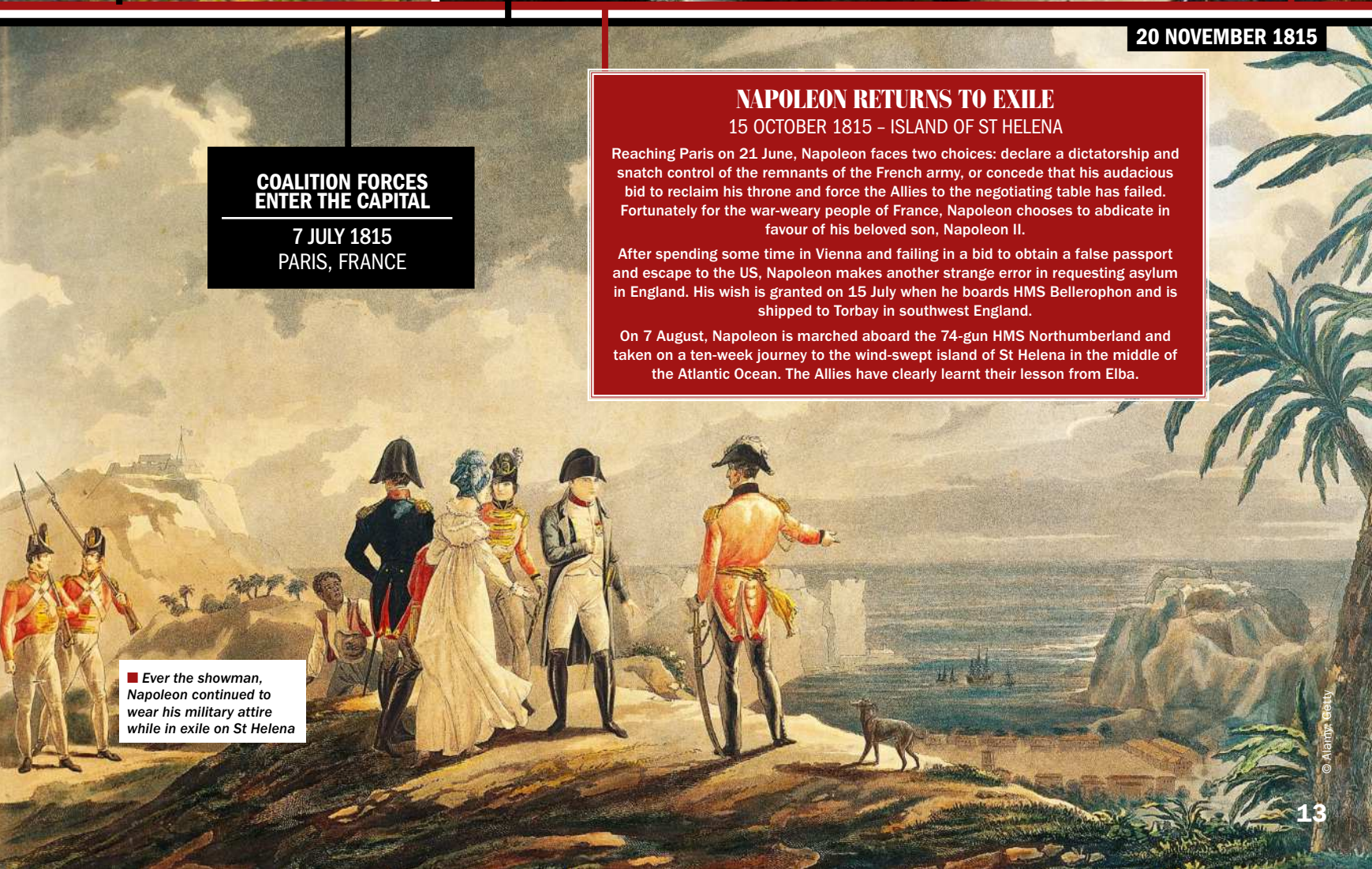
After spending some time in Vienna and failing in a bid to obtain a false passport and escape to the US, Napoleon makes another strange error in requesting asylum in England. His wish is granted on 15 July when he boards HMS Bellerophon and is shipped to Torbay in southwest England.

On 7 August, Napoleon is marched aboard the 74-gun HMS Northumberland and taken on a ten-week journey to the wind-swept island of St Helena in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. The Allies have clearly learnt their lesson from Elba.

COALITION FORCES ENTER THE CAPITAL

7 JULY 1815
PARIS, FRANCE

■ Ever the showman, Napoleon continued to wear his military attire while in exile on St Helena



Road to war

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Discover how a wave of social change threatened Europe's monarchies

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Find out how a young boy from Corsica became Emperor of France

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Explore what made Arthur Wellesley one of history's great generals

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France stood on the brink of annihilation at the hands of its allies

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Could the island of Elba hold the interest of an emperor?

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Napoleon risked everything in a final bid to win back France



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32

This paved road in the small Belgian town of Waterloo would have led Napoleon and his forces on to Brussels, which was situated just 17 kilometres away. It was paramount that the Allied forces put an end to this march in order to prevent Napoleon from devastating more of Europe in his quest for power and glory.





EUROPE IN UPHEAVAL

A WAVE OF SOCIAL CHANGE, EMERGING INITIALLY IN FRANCE, THREATENED THE MONARCHIES THAT HAD RULED EUROPE FOR CENTURIES

The spectre of class warfare and revolution in France alarmed the crowned heads of Europe. However, the public execution of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette made their own collective blood run cold. By the late 18th century, Europe was in turmoil. For centuries royal houses had ruled across the continent, intermarried, formed alliances, traded, built empires, and waged war against one another. Their right to rule had survived for hundreds of years, and now they clung to a rigid social structure with roots in medieval times.

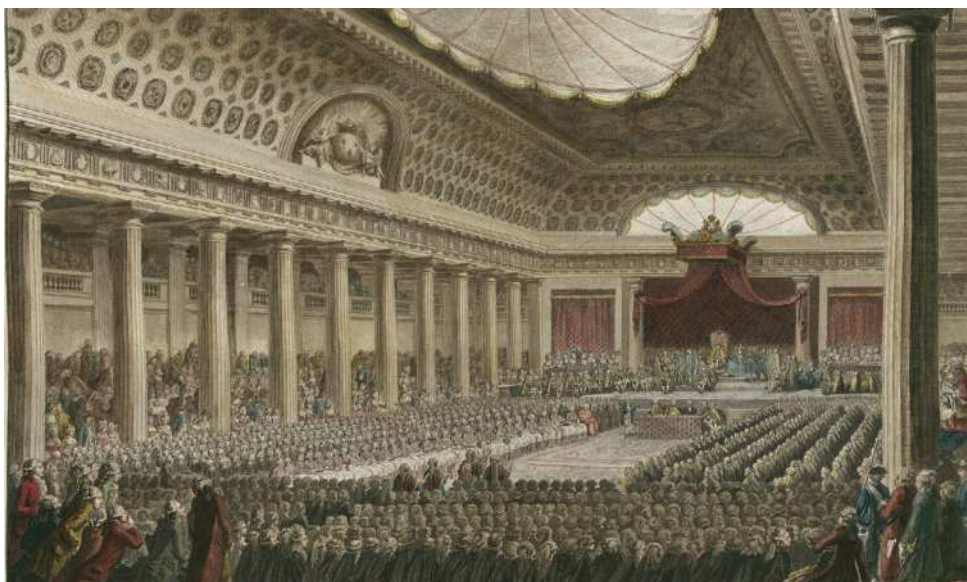
The royal houses of Europe ruled by might, their own interpretation of divine authority, and often with the support of the church. Inevitably, though, the emergence of innovative political and social thought during the Enlightenment, the growing populations of subjugated classes, and the increasingly obvious excesses of the aristocratic caste, raised the discontent of the people to new levels. After all, the workers tilled the land, paid the taxes, fought the wars, and acquiesced to the power of the crown, which often appeared distant and disdainful of the common citizenry.

Nowhere were the excesses of the royals more obvious than in France, where the court of Bourbon King Louis XVI lived lavishly on the backs of the workers. Unlike Britain, where the commoners had a voice in Parliament, and the upstart republic of the United States,

which the French themselves had assisted in obtaining independence, the people of France had no viable means short of demonstration to affect change. While the working classes often lived in abject poverty, the court of King Louis continued its exploitation without reform which, along with the prosecution of costly wars for empire and support of the American Revolution, spent the nation into bankruptcy, a financial oblivion that only worsened the condition of the poor.

At the same time, the latent emergence of the bourgeoisie, a middle class that was neither wealthy nor poor, began to influence the French social strata. This burgeoning middle class remained without political voice or vote; however, its control of the means of production further threatened the economic basis upon which the French monarchy perilously rested. Opposition to the French aristocracy steadily grew throughout the late 1700s, and the storm broke into open revolution in the spring of 1789.

Amid the upheaval of the revolution and the formation of the French First Republic, the European monarchies were confronted with a challenge to their centuries-old rule that might well be contagious, spreading uncontrollably across the continent. A decade of armed conflict followed as the French republic fought successive armed coalitions, giving rise to Napoleon Bonaparte, who continued the era of warfare until his ultimate defeat in 1815.



■ A financial crisis in France contributed to the convening of the Estates-General at the Palace of Versailles in May 1789

■ This iconic painting by Jacques-Louis David depicts a resolute Napoleon Bonaparte crossing the Alps during his successful campaign in Italy





**“NOWHERE WERE
THE EXCESSES OF THE
ROYALS MORE OBVIOUS
THAN IN FRANCE, WHERE
THE COURT OF BOURBON
KING LOUIS XVI LIVED
LAVISHLY ON THE BACKS
OF THE WORKERS”**



FRANCE

Ignoring the peoples' discontent, King Louis XVI's court paid in blood during the revolution

The first Bourbon King of France, Henry IV, ascended to the throne in 1589, and 200 years later the dynasty's rule of the country came to a resounding end. King Louis XVI presided over a period of unprecedented financial instability and social unrest that combined to topple the French monarchy, which was officially abolished on 21 September 1792. The French Revolution had begun more than three years earlier in the spring of 1789. While it had flourished, the

House of Bourbon had extended its rule to include the thrones of Spain, Sicily, Naples, and the duchy of Parma.

Economic hardship contributed greatly to the downfall of the Bourbons in France. The excessive spending of the court of Louis XVI had combined with poor harvests to cause great difficulties for farmers and the poor. In addition, the French had embarked on costly wars for empire, chiefly against Great Britain. Catastrophic defeat in the Seven

"ON 20 APRIL 1792, FRANCE RESPONDED TO THE THREAT OF INVASION FROM SURROUNDING MONARCHIES BY DECLARING WAR ON AUSTRIA, PRUSSIA, AND PIEDMONT, IGNITING THE WAR OF THE FIRST COALITION"

Depicted in full regalia in this portrait, King Louis XVI was imprisoned and executed during the French Revolution



By the late 18th century, the clergy and nobility constituted five percent of the French population and paid virtually no taxes



The execution of Marie Antoinette took place in Paris on 16 October 1793, shocking the European monarchies

Years' War had stripped France of many of its colonial possessions and added to the mountain of debt already incurred.

Some Frenchmen questioned their country's support for the American Revolution, which involved spending millions of francs and sending more than 10,000 soldiers along with a large portion of the French fleet to fight the British again. Despite the fact that the war was successful, France achieved little in exchange for its investment. The fact that the British had finally been defeated was of little consolation.

The overwhelming financial burden compelled Louis XVI to convene the Estates-General in the spring of 1789, and by the summer of 1790 this general assembly had forced the king to accept a constitution that limited his power and set the stage for his complete overthrow. The following spring, Louis attempted to escape the capital of Paris and join forces under the Marquis de Bouillé that were supposedly loyal to the crown at Montmedy, near the border with the Austrian Netherlands. However, he was captured at Varennes along with his queen, Marie Antoinette, and his young son, Louis, and imprisoned. The threat to the other monarchies of Europe was readily apparent, and even before the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793 and Marie Antoinette the following October a coalition of armies was moving against the French republic, which had proclaimed itself an enemy of all ruling monarchies.

On 20 April 1792, France responded to the threat of invasion from surrounding monarchies by declaring war on Austria, Prussia, and Piedmont, igniting the War of the First Coalition. Although the combined power of the coalition forces might have overwhelmed France, the alliance failed to develop a cohesive effort. After the execution of Louis and Marie Antoinette, Britain joined the war against the French republic. Following initial reverses, the French army, its ranks swelled by a general draft of able-bodied men called the *levee en masse*, made significant gains.

While Revolutionary France had declared war initially as a defensive measure, the conflict became an opportunity for conquest. Successes on the battlefield, significantly those of a young Napoleon Bonaparte, resulted in territorial concessions and separate peace agreements that left only Great Britain, the traditional enemy of France, at war against the First Republic.



GREAT BRITAIN

At the time of the French Revolution, Great Britain was the strongest economic power in Europe

Great Britain was perhaps the most stable of European monarchies throughout the period of the French Revolution and on the eve of the Napoleonic Wars. The vast British Empire supplied wealth and stimulated commerce, while industrialisation allowed a degree of productivity that was the envy of the rest of Europe. Britain, therefore, financed much of the cost of the fight against the burgeoning French Republic and subsequently the effort to subdue Napoleon Bonaparte that culminated at Waterloo in 1815.

King George III, the third British monarch of the German House of Hanover, had come to the throne in 1760. He declared his love for Britain, spoke English as his first language, and never visited Hanover. George III opposed the excesses of the French Revolution, particularly after the execution of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette. Despite the loss of much of Britain's colonial territory in North America after the American Revolution, George III remained a popular king. The French Revolution was troubling not only to the British crown, but also to the country's industrialists and prosperous landowners, who feared that the ideals of the uprising, 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité,' might carry along with them a movement for the redistribution of wealth and the means of production. They also recoiled at the apparent atrocities of the Reign of Terror with its spectacles of public execution.

The political leader of Great Britain during the revolutionary period was Prime Minister William Pitt, also known as Pitt the Younger. A man of energy and talent, Pitt was a polarising figure who maintained an agenda of social reform that was put off with the emergence of unrest on the European continent. He financed the coalitions that sought to curb French exportation of revolutionary ideas and unrest and instituted an income tax to allay the significant expense involved, including a large monetary subsidy payment to Prussia in exchange for maintaining an army of at least 60,000 men in the field during the War of the First Coalition.

Great Britain's primary military strength resided with the Royal Navy, which projected British power around the globe

■ Upon the entry of Britain into the War of the First Coalition against revolutionary France, Prime Minister William Pitt addressed Parliament



While Great Britain was neutral at the outbreak of the French Revolution, the excesses of the conflict, including France's hostility to other European monarchies and its threat to invade the Netherlands, compelled the British to join the First Coalition in 1793. For the next 23 years, Britain was regularly at war with Revolutionary, and then Napoleonic France, which at times threatened an invasion of Britain itself, a nightmare scenario that might well have ended in subjugation.

The conflict between these adversaries matured into an ideological struggle, the liberalism of the revolution, a mantle taken up by Napoleon, battling the defenders of Britain's constitutional monarchy. While the British Royal Navy was repeatedly victorious at sea, the British army required time to develop into a force that was formidable enough to oppose Napoleon on land.

During the revolutionary period, Great Britain emerged as the implacable, principal foe of an increasingly imperialistic France. Standing alone at times, Britain remained throughout the struggle as the only major European power that never agreed to an alliance with France or signed an unfavourable treaty with the French government.

"FOR THE NEXT 23 YEARS, BRITAIN WAS REGULARLY AT WAR WITH REVOLUTIONARY AND THEN NAPOLEONIC FRANCE, WHICH AT TIMES THREATENED AN INVASION OF BRITAIN ITSELF"



■ King George III of Great Britain was the island nation's sovereign for nearly 60 years until his death in 1820



PRUSSIA

Prussia initially supported the ideals of Revolutionary France but later changed its political and military course

By the late 18th century, the House of Hohenzollern had been preeminent in Prussia for nearly 300 years. Frederick William II, nephew of the famed Frederick The Great, came to the throne upon the death of his uncle in 1786. The foundation of Prussian power was the strength of its army; however, unlike his predecessors Frederick William had little interest in military affairs. He delegated responsibility for the army's training and esprit de corps to others, which later cost the nation dearly.

The outbreak of the French Revolution was initially welcomed by many prominent leaders in Prussia. In fact, Count Ewald Friedrich von Hertzberg, the Prussian Foreign Minister, detested the Bourbon monarchy of France as a decadent regime run by incompetent individuals. Frederick William also supported the revolution in its early stages. In addition to their enlightened perspective, the Prussians were also pragmatic. Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, was Austrian by birth, and therefore an alliance of sorts existed between the two countries. Despite their common German ancestry, Prussia and Austria had been rivals for some time. The revolution offered the opportunity to end that troubling alliance and isolate Austria.

“COUNT EWALD FRIEDRICH VON HERTZBERG, THE PRUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, DETESTED THE BOURBON MONARCHY OF FRANCE AS A DECADENT REGIME RUN BY INCOMPETENT INDIVIDUALS”

Although their differences nearly escalated to a declaration of war on more than one occasion, Prussia and Austria reached an accord in the summer of 1790, and in its wake Frederick William abandoned efforts to pursue an alliance with revolutionary France. Instead, Prussia assumed an adversarial posture. The aging von Hertzberg was relieved of duty in favour of Johann Rudolf von Bischoffwerder, who advocated a declaration of war against France. Bischoffwerder travelled to the Austrian capital of Vienna in the summer of 1791 and negotiated the Vienna Convention, signed on 25 July, which outlined the principles of an alliance between Austria and Prussia, whose combined armies would confront Revolutionary France with a considerable threat.

A month after the Vienna Convention, Frederick William and Leopold II, Holy Roman Emperor and Archduke of Austria, issued the Declaration of Pillnitz, which was neither a declaration of war nor a document that displayed any strategic initiative. Rather, the declaration was a statement of joint opposition to the revolution.

After military successes in the Seven Years' War of the mid-18th century, Prussia had nearly doubled in size by the French Revolution



Three months after revolutionary France declared war on Austria on 20 April 1792, the Duke of Brunswick led a Prussian army that invaded France, intending to march on Paris. The Prussians met the French at Valmy and were decisively defeated. The deterioration of Prussian combat efficiency was evident, and contemporary observers were stunned with outcome of the battle. It was the first major land engagement for the French army during the revolutionary wars.



RUSSIA

Before and during the French Revolution, Russia was continually at war with its neighbours

Catherine II, better known as Catherine the Great, ruled Russia from 1762 to her death in 1796. German by birth and a member of the House of Romanov by marriage, she claimed the throne of Russia following a coup d'état during which her husband, Czar Peter III, died under mysterious circumstances. During her reign, Russian prestige grew steadily. Territorial gains were accomplished through military victories against the Ottoman Empire, the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the colonisation of Alaska. She annexed the Crimea in 1783.

Although she was absolute ruler of Russia, she was also an enthusiastic supporter of the Enlightenment and was inspired by the writings of Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, one of the foremost

French thinkers and authors of the period. Catherine embraced the ideals of the Enlightenment and initiated reforms in Russia that touched many aspects of society, including the law, the education of women, and the economy. In the tradition of Peter the Great, she continued to turn the empire toward the West. Remembered as an enlightened despot, Catherine the Great also was the catalyst for the Russian Enlightenment, encouraging the growth of the arts and sciences.

With the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, Russia was already embroiled in a war with Sweden, and Catherine's familiarity with the principles of the Enlightenment led her to support the revolution in the beginning. However, as the upheaval persisted she grew disenchanted with the continuing violence and class struggle. Eventually, she disavowed many

The vast Russian Empire was by far the largest among the great powers of Europe, stretching to the Pacific Ocean



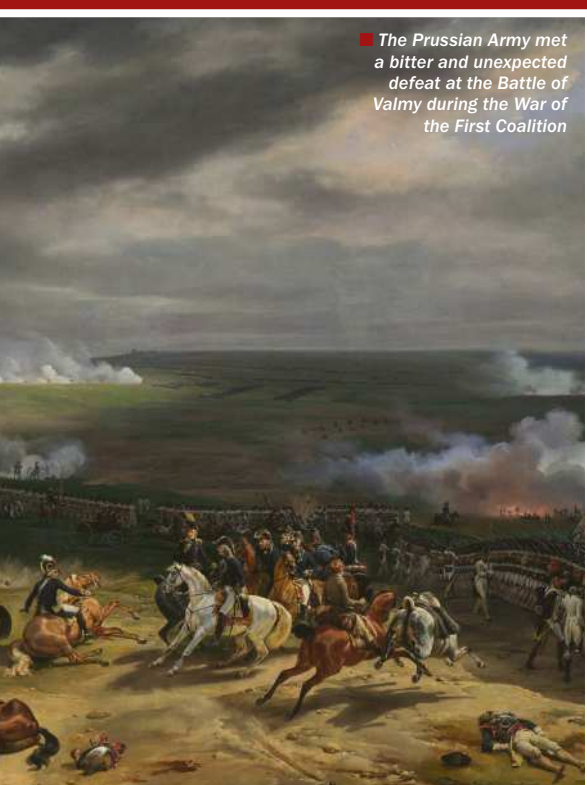
■ An enlightened despot, Catherine the Great of Russia rejected many principles of the Enlightenment after the French Revolution

of the tenets of the Enlightenment that she had previously embraced.

Russia did not participate in the War of the First Coalition, and Catherine died in 1796, prior to its end. She was somewhat estranged from her son, Paul I, and did not intend for him to inherit the Russian throne. Rather, she favoured her grandson, Alexander, and when

“SHE HAD ALREADY PREPARED INSTRUCTIONS THAT HER SON WAS NOT TO SUCCEED HER”

■ The Prussian Army met a bitter and unexpected defeat at the Battle of Valmy during the War of the First Coalition



After suffering further military setbacks, the Prussians made territorial concessions and signed the Peace of Basel on 5 April 1795, ending their participation in the First Coalition.

Frederick William II died in the autumn of 1797 and was succeeded by his son, Frederick William III, who did not oppose France militarily again until the War of the Fourth Coalition in 1806. The results were disastrous for Prussia, which was reduced temporarily to a French vassal state.

she died suddenly of a stroke she had already prepared instructions that her son was not to succeed her. It is said that Alexander was aware of the document that would have made him Tsar of Russia, but he dared not disclose its existence.

In 1798, Russia joined Great Britain, Austria, the Ottoman Empire, and other states in the War of the Second Coalition against revolutionary France. Russian forces under the command of General Alexander Suvorov inflicted temporary setbacks on the French in Italy, while others participated with the British in a failed invasion of the Netherlands. The French decisively defeated combined Russian, Swiss, and Austrian armies at the Second Battle of Zurich in September 1799. Russia subsequently withdrew from the Second Coalition.

The reign of Paul I lasted only five years; he was assassinated on 23 March 1801, and succeeded by Catherine's original choice, his son Alexander I, who concluded an alliance with Prussia, ended a conflict with Britain, and began a diplomatic dialogue with Emperor Francis II of the Holy Roman Empire. Alexander I initially professed admiration for Napoleon and the French nation. However, he later came to believe that the French first consul was nothing more than "the most famous tyrant the world has produced."

AUSTRIA

Staunchly conservative, the Austrian monarchy opposed the French Revolution and set out to crush it

The first Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire was Charlemagne, crowned in the year 800. The last was Francis II of Austria, who abdicated after his army's crushing defeat by Napoleon's French Army at the Battle of Austerlitz in 1806. Even though the empire was dissolved, Austria remained a strident opponent of Napoleonic France.

Prior to its disastrous defeat in the War of the Third Coalition, Austria was a principal opponent of revolutionary France. The House of Habsburg, and its successor Habsburg-Lorraine, had ruled in Austria and the Holy Roman Empire since 1438, and by the time of the revolution the monarchy was firmly and conservatively entrenched. Marie Antoinette, the Archduchess of Austria and aunt of Francis II, married King Louis XVI of France in April 1770, forming a political alliance between the Habsburg and Bourbon houses. She was publicly guillotined by the revolutionaries on 16 October 1793, in the Place de la Revolution in Paris. Her execution enraged Austrian leaders, and the open contempt that the French radicals expressed for all European monarchies was a direct threat to the stability of the Austrian crown. That threat was increasingly alarming as the French armies of the First Republic gained the upper hand during the War of the First Coalition.

After settling its differences with Germanic rival Prussia, Emperor Leopold II, Francis' father and the brother of Marie Antoinette, had joined his counterpart, Prussian King Frederick William II in issuing the Declaration of Pillnitz. The declaration called upon other powers of Europe to intervene if the life of Louis XVI was threatened but also contained

the caveat that Austria would not go to war unless other European nations did so as well. On 1 March 1792, just days before revolutionary France declared war on Austria, Leopold II died, and Francis II ascended the Habsburg throne. Francis was supposedly indifferent to the fate of Marie Antoinette, having little recollection of his aunt and allowing negotiations for her release from prison to fizzle when he was unwilling to make any concessions to the French.

Francis personally led the Austrian Army for a time during the War of the First Coalition, but the French overcame early setbacks to seize the initiative and drive beyond their own borders, forcing the allied Prussians and Austrians back. Napoleon's successful campaign in Italy brought the Habsburg regime to the negotiating table, and the Treaty of Campo Formio, signed on 18 October 1797, ended the War of the First Coalition, as Britain was the only coalition partner still at war with revolutionary France.

Just five months after the signing of the treaty, however, France was again at war with a coalition, this time including Austria, Britain, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Portugal, Naples, and others. The Second Coalition achieved some early victories, but in the end was no more successful than its predecessor. Napoleon and the Consulate had assumed power in France by late 1799, and Russia pulled out of the fractious alliance. France gained new territories with the signing of the Treaty of Luneville in 1801, and the Second Coalition faded away.

Austria remained periodically at war with revolutionary and Napoleonic France for the next 14 years.

Austria was a component of the Holy Roman Empire, which dated to the Middle Ages, until its dissolution in 1806

■ The city of Vienna was the capital of Austria and the Holy Roman Empire during the era of the French Revolution



THE STAR OF NAPOLEON ASCENDANT

A ONCE OBSCURE ARMY OFFICER BORN ON THE ISLAND OF CORSICA ROSE TO BECOME A GREAT CONQUEROR AND EMPEROR OF FRANCE

Napoleon Bonaparte once said succinctly, "I found the crown of France in the gutter, and I picked it up."

In this instance, the emperor's comment was a supreme understatement. Perhaps the finest example of the self-made man of the 19th century, Napoleon did indeed rise from obscurity through the ranks of the French Army, navigating a maze of political intrigue, to become the foremost military strategist, tactician, and conqueror of his time, and to take on the mantle of Emperor of France.

Napoleon's ascent to the dizzying heights of power is a remarkable, sometimes miraculous, and always fascinating thread that wove its way through world history for more than 30 years and continues to reverberate today. As with many men who rise to greatness, Napoleon was the beneficiary of turbulent times and sweeping political change, he was fortunate to receive an education beyond that of the common people, and he was possessed of tremendous intellect and driving ambition.

Napoleon was born in the town of Ajaccio, capital of the island of Corsica, on 15 August 1769. Just a year earlier, the Kingdom of Genoa had ceded Corsica to France. Had Napoleon

been born a few months sooner, he would have grown up an Italian rather than a French citizen. His parents were of the minor nobility, and his father, Carlo Buonaparte, served as the island's representative to the court of French King Louis XVI. His mother, Letizia Ramolino, was a strict disciplinarian and the foremost influence on the life of the young Napoleon. Although he was born Napoleone di Buonaparte, by the time he reached his 20s, he had changed his name to a more French spelling and pronunciation with Napoleon Bonaparte.

Napoleon was the second of seven children to survive beyond infancy. A boy and girl had died young, and one older brother, Joseph, preceded him. Napoleon studied at a Catholic school in the French city of Autun. He and Joseph travelled there in early 1779 in company with their father, who was en route to the French court at the Palace of Versailles.

It was often customary in society at the time for the second son of a noble family to pursue a career in the military. After only four months in Autun, Napoleon was accepted to the military academy at the town of Brienne-le-Chateau, where he studied for the next four years as his father was able to secure a scholarship to finance his education. Napoleon spoke

"NAPOLEON'S ASCENT TO THE DIZZYING HEIGHTS OF POWER IS A REMARKABLE, SOMETIMES MIRACULOUS, AND ALWAYS FASCINATING THREAD THAT WOVE ITS WAY THROUGH WORLD HISTORY FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS"

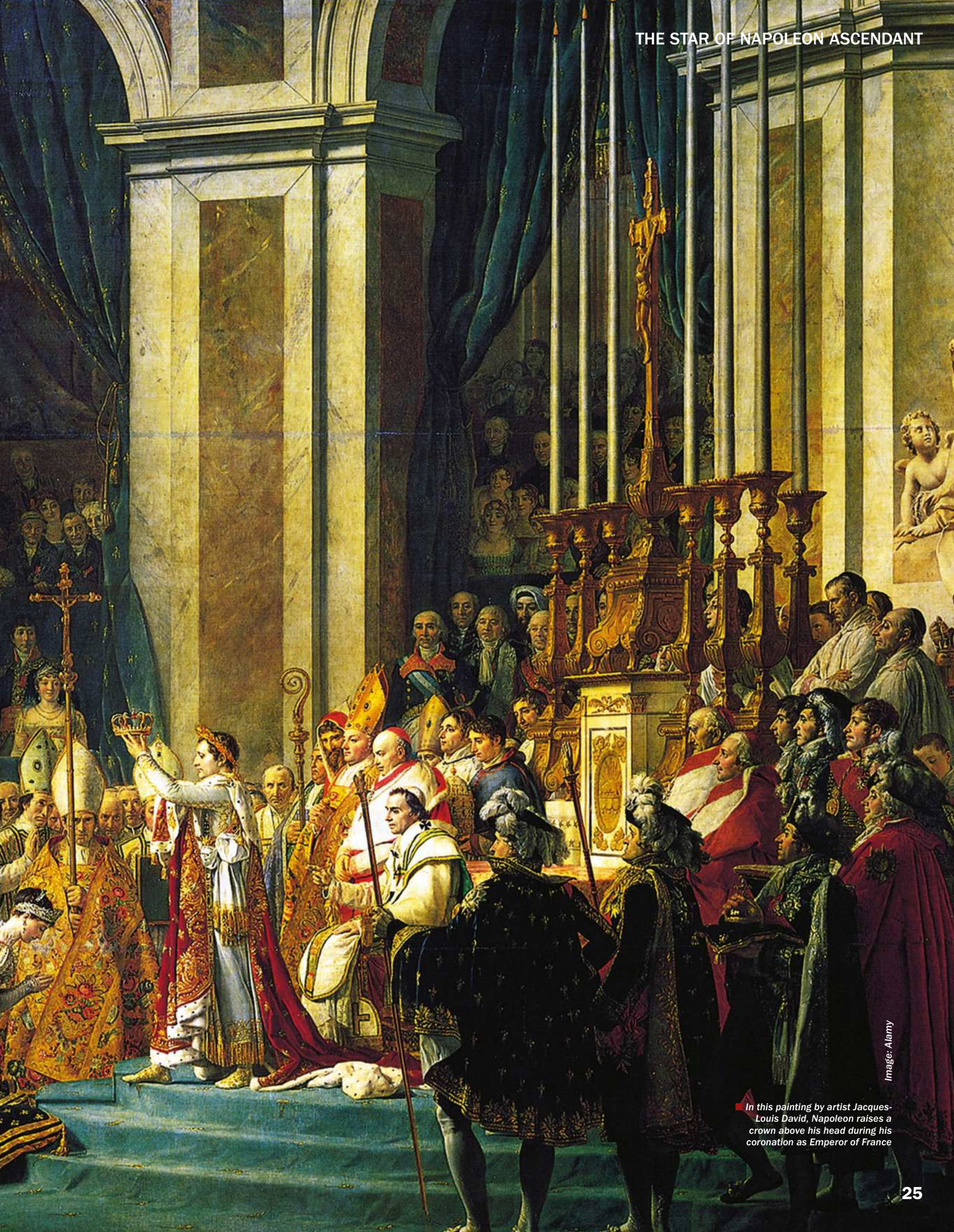


Image: Alamy

In this painting by artist Jacques-Louis David, Napoleon raises a crown above his head during his coronation as Emperor of France

Corsican as his first language and learned French during his schooling in the country.

After graduating from the Brienne military academy, Napoleon entered the École Militaire, the elite military academy located in the French capital of Paris. His father's untimely death in February 1785 brought financial hardship, placing further education in jeopardy. However, Napoleon exhibited several of those innate personality traits that would serve him well in later life. He was focused, intense, self-disciplined, and possessed incredible energy. Although he enjoyed being alone, he also cultivated friendships at the École Militaire. He was a meticulous planner, rarely leaving anything to chance in preparations for examinations or other activities.

Initially, Napoleon aspired to be a naval officer; however, an aptitude for mathematics pushed him toward the artillery. Out of necessity, he completed the school's two-year program in just one year, ranking a rather unimpressive 42nd in a class of 58 graduates.

The first Corsican to graduate from the prestigious École Militaire, Napoleon was commissioned a second lieutenant in the La Fère Regiment of artillery at the age of 16. Still, due to his somewhat low social status, the prospects for advancement were rather dismal. The rigid class structure of Bourbon France was a formidable barrier to promotion.

While the spark of the French Revolution smouldered, Napoleon completed further training in the city of Auxonne, where the French Army's artillery school was located. He was ordered to the town of Valence in southeastern France, where there was little activity related to his military vocation. He spent long hours reading, educating himself on the political landscape of the day, and absorbing great volumes of history, geography, and philosophy.

Napoleon took extended leaves from the army during a two-year period, visiting Paris and returning to his native Corsica. He was, no doubt, keenly aware of the political unrest that was emerging in France at the time. The poor, working class population of the country, particularly in its major cities, had become disenchanted and angry with its continuing exploitation by an aristocracy that lived in the lap of luxury, distant and apparently looking upon the common people with disdain.

PATRIOTISM, POLITICS, AND OPPORTUNITY

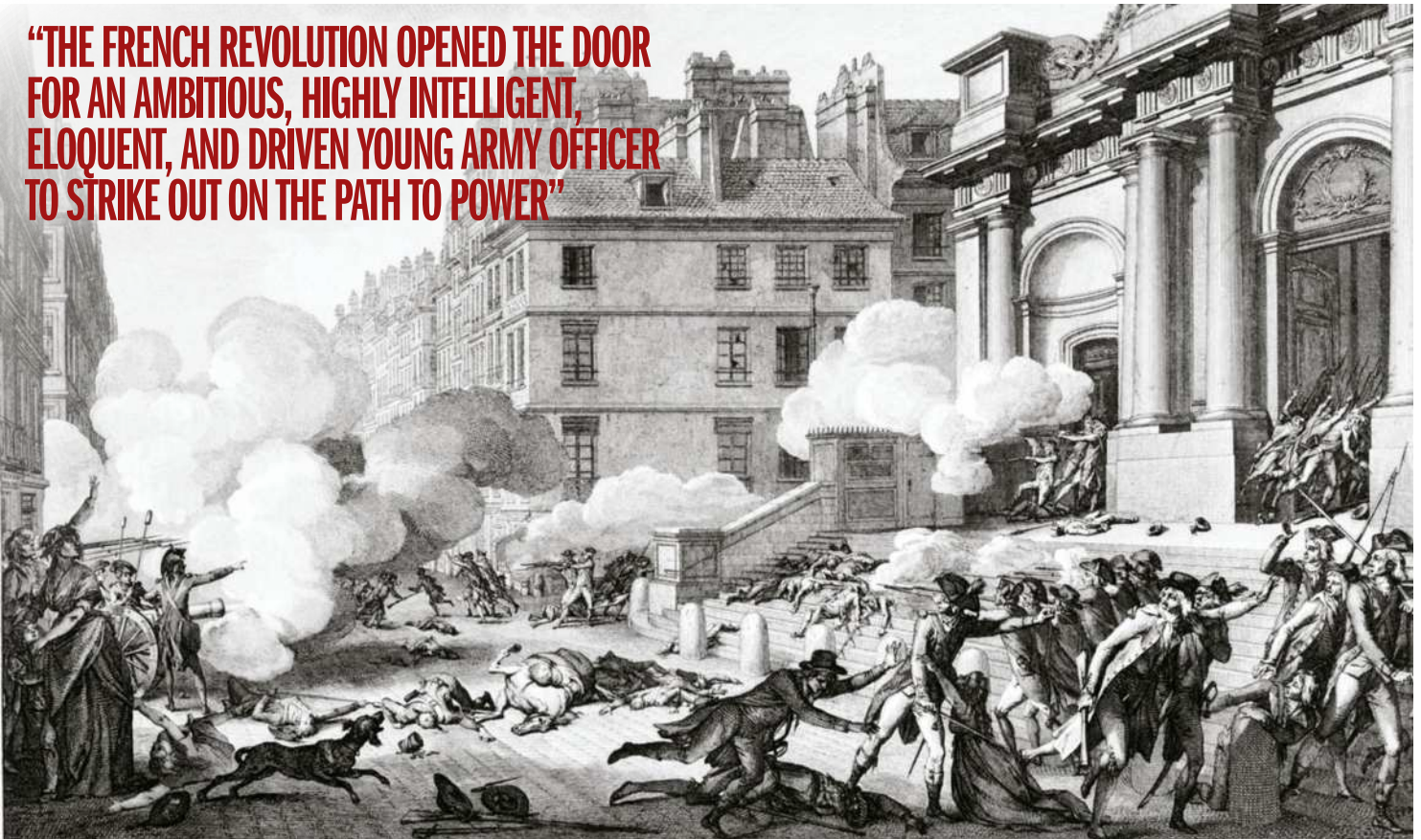
Perhaps Napoleon's personal experience on the fringe of the French nobility, where his own career path was obviously limited, his continuing self-education, and his strong attachment to his native island home cultivated

**"30,000 FRENCHMEN WERE
VOMITED ONTO OUR SHORES,
DROWNING THE THRONE OF
LIBERTY IN WAVES OF BLOOD"**

■ *Napoleon as First Consul of France by artist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres*



“THE FRENCH REVOLUTION OPENED THE DOOR FOR AN AMBITIOUS, HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, ELOQUENT, AND DRIVEN YOUNG ARMY OFFICER TO STRIKE OUT ON THE PATH TO POWER”



■ Troops and artillery under the command of Napoleon crush a royalist assault on the French revolutionary government in the streets of Paris

NAPOLEON AND THE CHURCH

The famed French leader acknowledged the significant role religion played in the lives of the people

Although Napoleon Bonaparte believed that the Roman Catholic Church favoured the Catholic monarchy of Austria over the revolutionary government of France, he never disavowed the institution and recognised its prominent role in the fabric of society. Napoleon was born and baptised Catholic, remained Catholic his entire life, and received the last rights of the church on his deathbed. Wherever he led conquering armies, Napoleon proved pragmatic and tolerant, respectful of different religious customs and allowing the native population to continue its practices without interference.

Nevertheless, Napoleon's personal religious views seem somewhat contradictory. Driven by insatiable ambition, he had gained an empire through force. Yet, later in life he is said to have admired the ability of Jesus Christ to influence the course of world events so profoundly with a message of love and salvation. Despite his Catholic upbringing, he once remarked, “All religions have been made by men.” Therefore, it is likely that Napoleon considered the freedom to express religion as a tool to extend control of the masses, contributing to his ultimate goal of building an unrivalled empire.

Scholars, however, remain divided as to whether Napoleon nurtured a real faith in God or simply used his ancestral bond to the Catholic Church to advance his agenda of conquest.

■ Pope Pius VII reigned from 1800 to 1823 and witnessed the coronation of Napoleon as Emperor of France.



an inherent Corsican nationalism in the young officer. In May 1789, before he had turned 20 years of age, he was a committed, ardent proponent of an independent Corsica and wrote an impassioned letter to Pasquale Paoli, the president of the Executive Council of the General Diet of the People of Corsica.

“As the nation was perishing I was born,” Napoleon wrote. “30,000 Frenchmen were vomited onto our shores, drowning the throne of liberty in waves of blood. Such was the odious sight which was the first to strike me.”

In that same month, the discontent of the French people erupted in violent revolution. In Paris, the middle class moved to form a National Assembly that openly confronted the French monarchy, the aristocracy, and the administration of the Roman Catholic Church. Within weeks, an angry mob stormed the Bastille in Paris, prisoners were freed from their cells, and civil unrest spread rapidly.

Meanwhile, Napoleon engaged in the clash of rival factions in Corsica. Nationalists, radicals, and royalists vied for control of the island. Although he had supported an independent Corsica, the young officer disagreed with Paoli and began to lean toward a more democratic group, the Jacobins. Paoli, however, continued to advocate a complete severance of ties with France.

By 1792, the French monarchy had been toppled and the nation had been declared a republic. Despite the fact that he had spent long periods away from the army and actually led violent demonstrations against French troops in Corsica, Napoleon was promoted

to captain in the French Army and returned to his regiment in the city of Nice. In June 1793, six months after King Louis XVI was publicly executed in the Place de la Révolution in Paris, the entire Bonaparte family fled its homeland and settled on the French mainland.

The French Revolution opened the door for an ambitious, highly intelligent, eloquent, and driven young army officer to strike out on the path to power. The Jacobin-inspired Reign of Terror, meant to exert control over a country wracked by revolution, counter-revolution, and rioting in the streets, also contributed to the removal of much of the aristocratic senior officer caste of the French Army. Further, the overthrow of the Bourbon Dynasty threatened the security and stability of the remaining monarchies of Europe.

As pangs of fear struck rulers across the continent, the logical course of action appeared to be a military move against the French revolutionary government, a campaign that would restore the House of Bourbon to the throne, quiet the upheaval in France, and squelch the ideas of political and social redress that had become so troublesome.

In 1792, the First Coalition, a loose alliance of Austria, Great Britain, Prussia, Russia, and other countries went to war against the French First Republic. Destitute of experienced senior military commanders and with its ranks populated by many soldiers who had little training, discipline, or experience, the French Army needed capable leadership. Conditions were becoming increasingly favourable for the rise of Napoleon.

In the summer of 1793, the young captain of artillery was posted to the city of Toulon on the Mediterranean coast. A powerful British fleet had sailed into the harbour, supporting an uprising of royalist sympathisers and effectively allowing ground forces to take control of the city. During the fighting in Toulon, the captain of the French artillery was wounded.

Through the influence of Antoine Saliceti, a political officer who had accompanied the army to Toulon and happened also to be a fellow Corsican and friend of the Bonaparte family, Napoleon was given command of the artillery in the city.

Meanwhile, commanders who were senior to Napoleon were proving themselves weak and inadequate. Napoleon's friendship with Saliceti and his contact with the governing Committee of Public Safety in Paris, including the powerful Augustin Robespierre, brought tacit approval for the young commander of artillery to prosecute the military effort at Toulon despite the protests of General Jean Baptiste Francois Carteaux, the nominal officer in command.

Napoleon was promoted to the rank of major in September. His quick grasp of the tactical situation compelled him to write to the leaders in Paris that his superiors at Toulon were "a bunch of fools." Napoleon believed that the key to driving the British fleet from the harbour lay in capturing nearby heights and two fortifications, l'Eguillette and Balaguier. From there, the enemy warships would be within range of French guns and compelled to evacuate the harbour.

Carteaux had agreed but insisted on retaining command of the initial assault against

British positions on the high ground. The attack was uninspired and ineffective. After the failure, Bonaparte assumed control of the continuing effort to take the key positions. Within days, Napoleon had constructed artillery emplacements to bombard the British fortifications. Then, on 16 December, he led another assault against the strong points.

During the attack, Napoleon received a serious bayonet wound in the thigh. Nevertheless, the objectives were captured, the enemy fleet withdrew from Toulon harbour, and the young lieutenant of artillery received tremendous praise for his conduct of the operation. He was rewarded with a great leap forward in rank, promotion to brigadier general at the age of only 24.

JACOBINS, JEOPARDY, AND TRIUMPH

By the spring of 1794, Napoleon had been elevated to command of the artillery of the Army of Italy, then battling Austria and the Kingdom of Sardinia in the mountains of northern Italy. Napoleon planned an offensive that would lead to a significant victory against the First Coalition at the Battle of Saorgio in April. The success of the campaign that followed forced the Austrians and Sardinians to sign a treaty with the French the following month.

The political situation in Paris remained in turmoil, however, and in July 1794 the Jacobins were swiftly removed from power during the Thermidorian Reaction. Maximilien Robespierre,

THE BATTLE OF THE PYRAMIDS

Napoleon's invading French Army defeated the opposing Mamluk forces and temporarily occupied Egypt

On 21 July 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte exhorted his troops as they went into battle against the Mamluk army commanded by Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey. "Forward! Remember that from those monuments yonder 40 centuries are looking down upon you," he roared. The French victory at the Battle of the Pyramids, fought just a few miles from the ancient wonders and a short distance from the city of Cairo, sealed the temporary conquest of Egypt for France, although the campaign ultimately ended in disaster.

During the battle, Napoleon employed an effective battlefield tactic against the best of the Mamluk army, its strong cavalry formations. The French soldiers formed infantry squares, presenting a solid front against the charging Mamluk horsemen along with concentrated musketry and the points of bayonets.

With the aid of artillery fire, they repulsed multiple Mamluk charges while attacks against a detached French force were repelled as well. French casualties amounted to only 29 killed and 260 wounded, while Mamluk losses are believed to have topped 3,000.

Despite the one-sided victory, Napoleon's hopes of establishing an empire in the Middle East were dashed ten days later with the British Royal Navy's defeat of his fleet at the Battle of the Nile.



In this rendition of the Battle of the Pyramids by artist Francois-Louis-Joseph Watteau, an ancient monument looms against a red sky

“AS THE ANGRY ROYALIST MOB APPROACHED THE TUILERIES ON 5 OCTOBER, NAPOLEON DID NOT FLINCH, ORDERING HIS COMMAND TO FIRE. WITHIN MINUTES AS MANY AS 1,400 ROYALISTS LAY DEAD AND DYING IN THE STREET”

the central figure in the Reign of Terror, went to the guillotine, as did his brother Augustin, Napoleon's friend and benefactor. Napoleon, who was in Nice during this period, was placed under house arrest supposedly due to his association with the Robespierre brothers and other Jacobins. He is said to have penned a letter while under arrest, pleading with the National Convention for leniency in the case of his friend Saliceti, who was subsequently acquitted and escaped the guillotine.

Accounts of Napoleon's incarceration vary. Some assert that he was held under house arrest for as little as two weeks. Others state that he was imprisoned for several months, tried, and found guiltless of any crime. In fact, those who judged him were reported to have been impressed with the officer's stellar military record. By 1795, Napoleon had returned to Paris and was assigned to the Bureau of Topography after feigning poor health to avoid an infantry command, a perceived demotion for an officer of artillery, in the Vendée region fighting the royalists.

Although his exploits at Toulon had made Napoleon a national hero, his Jacobin political ties and refusal to serve in the Vendée campaign caused his reputation and career to suffer. He was haunted by financial hardship, and his name was removed from the roll of active general officers.

Once again, it seems that fate played a hand in the fortunes of the ambitious Corsican. On 3 October 1795, hundreds of Parisian royalists took to the streets intent on storming the Tuileries Palace, where the fragile government of the National Convention and the Directory had taken refuge. Paul Barras, a principal participant in the Thermidorian Reaction, remembered Napoleon's triumph at Toulon and placed the discredited general in charge of the defence of the Tuileries. Without hesitation, Napoleon seized the opportunity, ordering a young cavalry officer, Joachim Murat, to marshal troops and cannon for the fight that was to come.

As the angry royalist mob approached the Tuileries on 5 October, Napoleon did not flinch, ordering his command to fire. Within minutes as many as 1,400 royalists lay dead and dying in the street. British historian Thomas Carlyle said the grim task was completed in “a whiff of grapeshot.”

Napoleon earned the gratitude of the National Convention and the Directory along with the undying loyalty of Murat, who later became one of his senior commanders. He



■ After Napoleon's forces capture the heights surrounding Toulon harbour, British troops and warships evacuate in December 1793



■ Napoleon's father, Carlo Buonaparte, represented the island of Corsica at the court of French King Louis XVI



■ This portrait of Napoleon depicts him as a young lieutenant colonel in command of a battalion of Corsican volunteers



■ Napoleon stands at the centre of the chaos in the National Assembly during the coup d'état of 9 November 1799

was soon named Commander of the Interior and placed at the head of the Army of Italy. Simultaneously, a romantic liaison blossomed with Josephine de Beauharnais, an aristocratic widow whose husband had been guillotined during the Reign of Terror and the former mistress of Barras. Napoleon and Josephine were married five months later.

The honeymoon was brief. On 11 March 1796, two days after the couple married, Napoleon set off to take command of the Army of Italy, a fighting force that few military men considered a capable offensive weapon. Poorly equipped, many of the soldiers were without proper uniforms – or even pants. Nevertheless, Napoleon displayed superb organisational skills and initiated a swift campaign against the Austrian Army in Italy. Rapid movement kept the enemy on its heels, and the army of Piedmont, an Austrian ally, was vanquished in just over two weeks.

A string of four successive victories culminated in January 1797 with a decisive triumph at Rivoli, where the Austrians lost 14,000 casualties. The Austrian position in Italy then became untenable, and Napoleon boldly mounted an expedition into the enemy's homeland. After defeating the Austrians at the Battle of Tarvis in March 1797, the French threatened their capital of Vienna. The Austrians made peace overtures and ceded much of northern Italy and the Low Countries to France with the Treaty of Campo Formio, signed in mid-October.

Napoleon's masterstroke against Austria precipitated the collapse of the First Coalition. After the Treaty of Campo Formio, only Great Britain remained as an active opponent of the French armed forces. Soon enough, however, the Second Coalition would rise to challenge the French commander whose military genius was now proven on the battlefield. Napoleon had gained the admiration and loyalty of his troops and acclaim from the French people while earning the nickname of the 'Little Corporal', since he was never far from the fighting.

At the same time, he often took unilateral action, negotiating on his own without the authority of the government in Paris. In the process, he solidified a belief in himself as a man of destiny. Parisian politicians were dazzled with his success but wary of this general who marched confidently with a powerful army at his shoulder.

While Britain remained in opposition, Napoleon devised a daring offensive fraught with risk that might ultimately result in complete victory. The conquest of Egypt was, he reasoned, a stepping stone to threaten British interests in India. The French Army would establish itself in the Middle East and forge an anti-British alliance with Muslim rulers that would inflict a decisive defeat on the enemy.

Napoleon did successfully invade Egypt in early 1798, but the French Navy was unable to exert control of the Mediterranean Sea. It suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Lord

THE NAPOLEONIC CODE

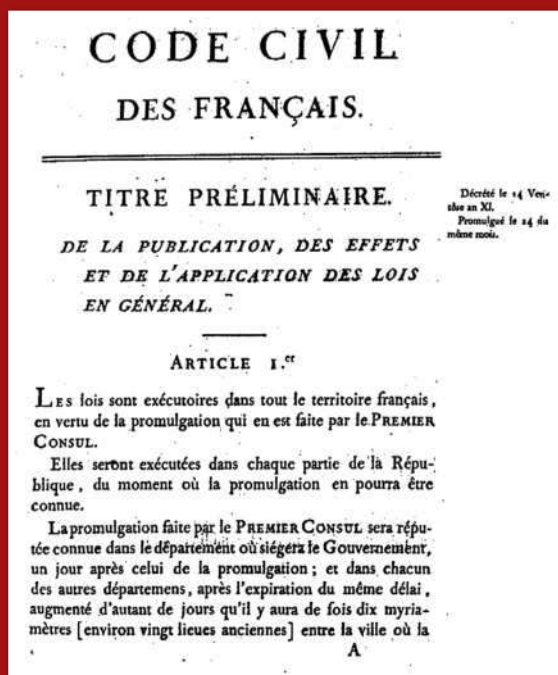
The Napoleonic Code serves as the model for bodies of law beyond that of revolutionary France

The Napoleonic Code, established in 1804 during the rule of Emperor Napoleon I, embodied an effort to codify in law many of the principles of the French Revolution. Inspired by ancient Roman law developed in the time of Emperor Justinian, the Napoleonic

Code was divided into four sections relating to persons, property, acquisition of property, and civil procedure. It effectively replaced the variety of feudal laws across France with a standardised system. The code promised equality for all people, asserting that individuals have the right to pursue any type of occupation and ensuring religious freedom. It ended a lengthy system of feudal and royal law that often favoured one party through exemptions, special orders, or privileges.

In a clear departure from earlier applications of law in France and throughout much of Europe, the Napoleonic Code clarified legal authority and applied both specific authority and restrictions on judges. Its influence extended beyond France and into the lands that Napoleon conquered. The code was formally adopted in several European countries, including Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Portugal. Drafts of the code were begun as early as 1793 and adopted over a number of years. However, Napoleon pursued the effort with vigour when the Consulate came to power in 1799.

■ The first page of this 1804 edition of the Napoleonic Code introduces it as the Civil Code of the French



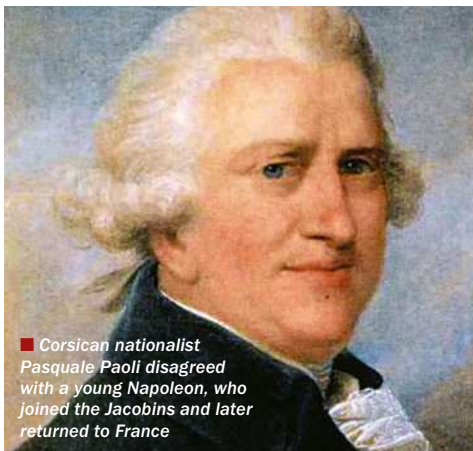
“NAPOLEON HAD GAINED THE ADMIRATION AND LOYALTY OF HIS TROOPS AND ACCLAIM FROM THE FRENCH PEOPLE WHILE EARNING THE NICKNAME OF THE ‘LITTLE CORPORAL’, SINCE HE WAS NEVER FAR FROM THE FIGHTING”



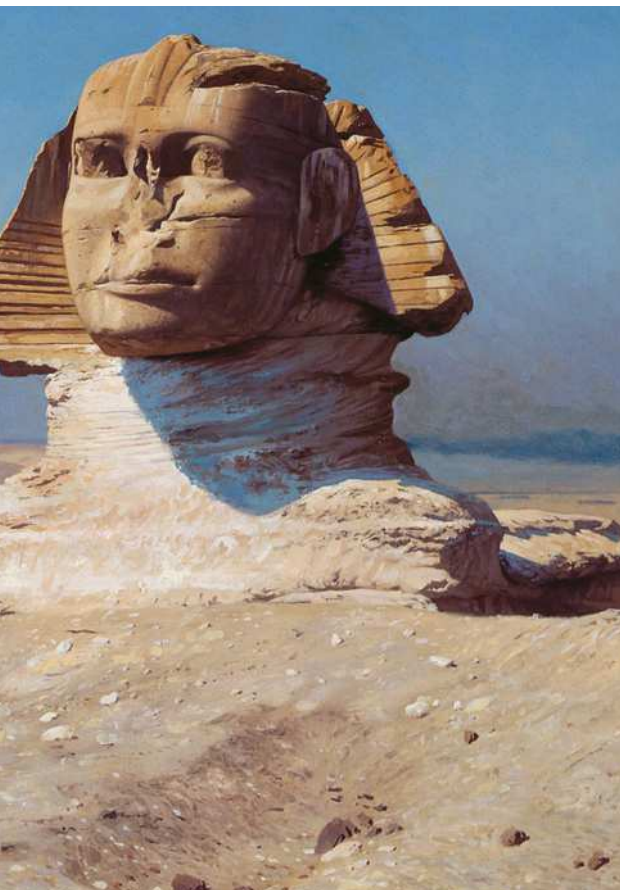
■ Sitting on horseback, Napoleon contemplates the Sphinx during his abortive campaign in Egypt. This painting by Jean-Léon Gérôme was completed in 1868



■ Empress Josephine sits in her coronation costume. She could not produce an heir, and Napoleon divorced her for Maria Louisa of Austria



■ Corsican nationalist Pasquale Paoli disagreed with a young Napoleon, who joined the Jacobins and later returned to France



Horatio Nelson and the Royal Navy at the Battle of the Nile in August. Subsequently, the French Army in the Middle East was marooned and without a secure supply line. An advance into Syria ended with the failed siege of Acre in 1799.

While his army languished in Egypt, eventually surrendering to the British, Napoleon received word that political unrest had again heated up in Paris. Ever the opportunist, he left the troops to their fate, slipped across the Mediterranean, and joined a conspiracy to overthrow the Directory and to seize power in France.

FROM CONSPIRACY TO CROWN AND EMPIRE

While Napoleon's ill-conceived foray into Egypt foundered, the so-called War of the Second Coalition had gone badly for France in Europe as well. Much of the territorial gains made in Italy had been lost in recent months, and the military reverses contributed to the flagging popularity of the Directory.

By the time Napoleon reached Paris in October 1799, the military situation had somewhat stabilised, but France was virtually bankrupt. It was apparent that government was on the verge of collapse. The Directory had sent orders for Napoleon to return to France to defend the homeland against invasion, but he departed Egypt before those orders arrived. Although he had essentially deserted his post, the Directory was too weak-willed to impose punishment.

Despite the defeat in Egypt, Napoleon continued to enjoy extraordinary popularity with the French people. The time for a coup d'état had arrived, and the conspirators, several members of the Directory among them, approached Napoleon to participate. On 9 November 1799, the conspirators overthrew the Directory, and the event became known as the '18th Brumaire' in reference to the revolutionary calendar.

The government that replaced the Directory was known as the Consulate, a classical reference to the Roman Republic. Along with Napoleon, two former members of the Directory, Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès and Pierre-Roger Ducos, joined the military hero as consuls. True to form, however, Napoleon had no taste for cooperative government. Within weeks, the influence of Sieyès and Ducos had been extinguished. Although the government maintained the semblance of a republic, Napoleon was supreme in the role of First Consul.

While he consolidated power in France, giving only a nod through a rigged plebiscite to the representative form of government and political ideals that had been unleashed during the revolution, Napoleon faced a very real external threat. Eager to assert dominance, he moved militarily against the Second Coalition.

Once again, Napoleon advanced toward the Austrians in Italy. At the Battle of Marengo on 14 June 1800, a surprise Austrian attack came within a hair's breadth of inflicting a terrible defeat on Napoleon's army. However, the Austrian commander, General Michael von Melas, assumed that he had broken the French lines and left the details to suzerainties. In fact, the French had executed only and tactical withdrawal.

"DESPITE THE DEFEAT IN EGYPT, NAPOLEON CONTINUED TO ENJOY EXTRAORDINARY POPULARITY WITH THE FRENCH PEOPLE"

In late afternoon, Napoleon had rallied his forces and executed a successful counterattack that ultimately defeated the Austrians and helped further legitimise his hold on political power in Paris. Napoleon returned to his capital in triumph, and an agreement with Austria brought northern Italy, the Netherlands, and lands on the left bank of the great River Rhine into the French fold.

By 1802, a classic military standoff had developed. While Great Britain's Royal Navy ruled the high seas, Napoleon and the French Army were preeminent on land. The two powers signed the Treaty of Amiens on 25 March 1802, each side offering assurances to the other, and a brief, uneasy peace settled across the European continent after ten years of almost constant warfare.

In the same year, Napoleon called for a plebiscite to approve the country's constitution as a means of making the Consulate a permanent governing entity. With overwhelming approval from the people, the plebiscite essentially proclaimed Napoleon First Consul for Life. For a time, Napoleon was afforded the opportunity to manage his country's colonial empire and settle territorial disputes that had plagued the Germanic principalities and free cities for years. Napoleon garnered the loyalty of numerous German princes and noblemen as he gave them additional lands and curtailed the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, which he considered somewhat hostile to revolutionary France. To replenish his depleted coffers, he sold the vast Louisiana Territory in North America to the United States for \$15 million in 1803.

Meanwhile, the tenuous peace of Amiens fell apart. By the spring of 1803, Great Britain had again declared war on France. The slow assemblage of the Third Coalition eventually pitted Great Britain, Russia, Sweden, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Kingdoms of Naples and Sicily against France and allied dominions. The ensuing Napoleonic Wars would ravage Europe until 1815.

Still, Napoleon sought to attain absolute power in France, warning that a movement was afoot to restore the Bourbon monarchy and using failed assassination plots, both real and imagined, to endear himself to the French people. Finally, he asserted that power by proclaiming himself Emperor of France.

At the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris on Sunday 2 December 1804, the improbable rise of Napoleon Bonaparte culminated with his coronation as Emperor Napoleon I. Reminiscent of the Caesars of Ancient Rome, the emperor wore a gold laurel wreath. Rather than crowning the monarch, Pope Pius VII was merely a spectator. Napoleon needed no validation beyond his own self-assurance that his destiny had been fulfilled.

FORGING WELL

DR HUW DAVIES OF KING'S COLLEGE LONDON
AND DR RORY MUIR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
ADELAIDE DISCUSS WHAT MADE ARTHUR
WELLESLEY A GREAT GENERAL AT SIGNIFICANT
POINTS DURING HIS CAREER

WORDS TOM GARNER

■ Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington' by Thomas Lawrence c.1815-16. Wellington was at the height of his powers in this portrait and is wearing the uniform of a Field Marshal



THE IRON DUKE: WELLINGTON

The military career of Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, is one of the most impressive of any British general. After rising to become one of the most significant captains of his age, he won successive victories in India, Portugal, Spain, France and finally Belgium where he defeated

the 'Master of Europe' Napoleon Bonaparte. Despite his undistinguished career as British Prime Minister, Wellington was lionised in his own lifetime and ever since. However, towering figure though he may be, Wellington did make mistakes in his career and his reputation as a man who 'never lost a battle' is somewhat misleading. It is time to reassess the 'Iron Duke'

and revisit key moments where Wellington won, but almost fell by the sword.

Born Arthur Wesley in Ireland in 1769 to an aristocratic Anglo-Irish family, the future Wellington hated his school days at Eton and showed little signs of greatness, with his mother stating, "I don't know what I shall do with my awkward son Arthur." Things changed when he

"IT IS TIME TO REASSESS THE 'IRON DUKE' AND REVISIT KEY MOMENTS WHERE WELLINGTON WON, BUT ALMOST FELL BY THE SWORD"



■ 'Scotland Forever' by Elizabeth Lady Butler, famously depicts the charge of the Scots Greys at the Battle of Waterloo

attended the Academy of Equitation in Angers, France where among other skills he became fluent in French. He was commissioned in the British Army in 1787 as an ensign and by 1793 he was a lieutenant colonel, largely thanks to his politician brother Richard's money and influence.

Wesley first saw action in 1794 in the Netherlands under the command of the 'Grand Old' Duke of York. The campaign was a failure and he later remarked that the experience taught him, "what one ought not to do; and that is always something!" Learning from mistakes would be a hallmark throughout his career. In 1797, Wesley was posted to India where

"IT WAS A REMARKABLE VICTORY, DESPITE THE FACT THAT WELLESLEY COULD HAVE AVOIDED IT, AND IT MADE HIS MILITARY REPUTATION"

his elder brother Richard (now Lord Wellesley, a surname both siblings adopted) had been appointed as governor-general. Selected as his brother's military advisor, Wellesley then spent many years strengthening British rule in India, which culminated in his first major victory at Assaye in 1803.

EARLY TESTS: ASSAYE & VIMEIRO

Wellesley was now a major general and fought in the Second Anglo-Maratha War (1803-05) where the Maratha Empire opposed British control in India. The conflict led to Wellesley fighting a desperate, but victorious fight at Assaye on 23 September 1803. Having erroneously divided his army, Wellesley's small force of around 7,000 stumbled across a huge Maratha army of 40-50,000 in a strong position behind the River Kaitna. Although his men had already marched 20 miles that day, and were unable to retreat, Wellesley attacked, placing his army between two rivers. This protected his flanks but would have been a death trap had he been defeated. The Marathas, who had been trained

Despite his impressive career, why did Wellington consider his first major victory at Assaye his finest accomplishment on the battlefield?



HUW DAVIES:

He snatched victory from defeat. It was something of a surprise encounter and the victory at Assaye really goes back to the previous few weeks campaigning where Wellesley constantly

underestimated his opponents, the Maratha Army. He had made the assumption that the Maratha Army was predominately a regular force, one based on predatory cavalry rather than well-trained European infantry. When he unexpectedly found them, he decided that he would attack. Only the previous day he had split his force into two because he didn't expect to find them because of the difficult terrain. He decided to attack them with only half the force that he had. He could see there were about 40,000 troops, but the vast majority were camp followers and suppliers. A lot of the cavalry couldn't be put into action and what remained was the infantry. It turned out that the infantry were trained in European methods by German mercenaries and they manoeuvred using European tactics, successfully resisting Wellesley's initial assaults.

It was his first major victory on the battlefield but his previous successes had been very low-key. This was an opportunity to prove himself as a worthy battlefield commander. It very nearly went wrong and it was only because of his personal intervention on several occasions that he achieved success. In many ways his management of the campaign until the battle was deficient but during the battle his tactical ability and calm demeanour despite the intense pressure enabled him to ensure success. However, it came at an enormous cost. He lost a third of his European infantry and was substantially weakened for weeks until reinforcements arrived.

Nevertheless it knocked the Marathas more than it did the British. Wellesley considered it to be one of his greatest victories because it was his first tactical battlefield success and because he managed to turn a dire situation that was largely of his own making into one of considerable achievement.

■ The Battle of Assaye was Wellington's first great victory against the Maratha Empire in India



■ The Siege of Burgos was one of the few occasions where Wellington suffered an outright defeat

in European methods, cleverly changed their front and assaulted Wellesley's right flank with heavy artillery fire as he advanced across the Kaitna. One third of the 5,000 men who crossed the river became casualties but on the opposite bank Wellesley's men reformed and with the help of a cavalry charge routed the Marathas who lost 6,000 killed. It was a remarkable victory, despite the fact that Wellesley could have avoided it, and it made his military reputation.

Wellington returned home in 1805 to a Europe convulsed by war. In that year, the Royal Navy had won a resounding victory at Trafalgar but Napoleon Bonaparte had trounced his opponents at Austerlitz and dominated the continent. He continued with successes at Jena-Auerstedt (1806) and Friedland (1807) and then turned against his former ally, Spain, by usurping the Spanish throne in 1808 and placing his brother Joseph upon it. The Spanish rebelled against the French and this encouraged the British to send an expeditionary force to the Iberian Peninsula. The Peninsular War had begun.

“IT WAS ONLY THE LACK OF BRITISH CAVALRY AND ARTILLERY THAT PREVENTED JUNOT BEING DECISIVELY DEFEATED”

WELLINGTON IN SPAIN & PORTUGAL

Lieutenant General Wellesley was despatched with the intention of preventing Portugal from being occupied by the French and disembarked his army 160 kilometres north of Lisbon in early August 1808. However, Wellesley learned that he was to be superseded in command by the governor of Gibraltar and marched quickly south to inflict defeats on the French before he was replaced. He first encountered the French at Rolica on 17 August and won a small victory. Shortly afterwards, on 28 August, he won his first major Peninsula fight at Vimeiro.

Wellesley's 18,000 men outnumbered the 14,000 French troops marching under Major General Junot. The French attacked in column, which was their standard practice, but were thrown back by volley fire from the British infantry who then advanced with bayonet charges. Two French brigades were pushed back northwards and it was only the lack of British cavalry and artillery that prevented Junot being decisively defeated. Portugal was saved from invasion but Wellesley received little thanks.

He was recalled to Britain for reluctantly signing an agreement under orders that allowed the French to evacuate their troops from Portugal. In his absence, a British advance into Spain failed and was evacuated from Corunna with Portugal once again being threatened. Wellesley returned in April 1809, reorganised the Anglo-Portuguese armies, expelled the French and set his sights on a new advance into Spain.

■ Wellington considered Napoleon to be one of the best generals of all time

■ *The Third of May 1808* by Francisco Goya. The Peninsular War was notable for its brutal nature where many atrocities were committed on all sides



■ This jewel encrusted sword was captured by Wellington's forces after the defeat of Tipu Sultan in India

“THE KEY TO ADVANCING INTO SPAIN WAS TAKING TWO FORTRESSES NEAR THE PORTUGUESE-SPANISH BORDER: CIUDAD RODRIGO AND BADAJOZ”

He moved into the country in June but the campaign became chaotic with his advance being hampered by the incompetence of his allies. Communications were poor and Spanish promises of food and transport were not kept. Consequently the British Army only received ten days of rations between 20 July to 20 August while French armies encroached on the

Anglo-Spanish force, meeting at Talavera 120 kilometres southwest of Madrid on 27 July. The French numbered 46,000 while the Anglo-Spanish consisted of 55,000 men, but of those only 21,500 were British and Wellesley felt that he could not rely on the Spanish. He therefore used terrain to aid him, positioning his men in a variety of defensive positions including streams,



ravines, high ground and even olive groves and irrigation channels.

Fierce fighting occurred over 27-28 July and the French retreated but the British were too exhausted to follow them. Allied casualties were similar to the French, at approximately 7,000, with the British taking a disproportionate share of the losses. With other French armies closing in, Wellesley was forced to leave his wounded behind and retreated to the Portuguese frontier. He later angrily wrote to the British government about the Spanish: "I can only tell you that I feel no inclination to join in co-operation with them again." Nevertheless, Talavera gave hope that the French could be defeated and Wellesley received a new title: Viscount Wellington.

SIEGE MENTALITY

Following Talavera, Wellington decided to ensure a lasting British presence in Iberia by ordering the construction of two defensive lines of trenches and fortifications between 20-40 kilometres north of Lisbon, which became known as the Lines of Torres Vedras. The lines stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the River Tagus and were built between November 1809 to September 1810 using local labour under the command of British engineers. Each redoubt was garrisoned with three to six guns and 200-300 men while any prominent landscape features were flattened to deny the enemy cover. Rivers were dammed to flood the ground below

"THE BRITISH LOST NEARLY 5,000 MEN IN ONE NIGHT AND THE SURVIVORS THEN WENT ON A VENGEFUL ORGY OF LOOTING, RAPE AND MURDER"

hills and this massive operation was completed under the strictest security to deny the French knowledge of its existence.

The deception worked and when the French attempted to advance into Portugal they unexpectedly came across the lines. Marshal Masséna reputedly remarked, "Even if we had forced some point of the Lines, we should not have had enough men left to seize and occupy Lisbon." Masséna probed at the lines for a month but was eventually forced to withdraw. Portugal was secured and Wellington renewed his attack into Spain with increased confidence.

The key to advancing into Spain was taking two fortresses near the Portuguese-Spanish border: Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. The citadels were 130 miles apart but Wellington had to take them quickly as the French had the strength to concentrate numerically larger armies against him. Speed and surprise were essential but this was difficult as siege warfare was a slow process. Nonetheless, Wellington threw his well-prepared army into a mid-winter assault on Ciudad Rodrigo. Despite heavy casualties, the fortress was stormed and taken in January 1812 and this success encouraged Wellington to move south and take Badajoz, but this proved much more difficult. There

■ Arthur Wellesley aged 26 in 1795. Wellesley had seen action for the first time the year before in the Netherlands fighting under the Duke of York



had already been two unsuccessful sieges at Badajoz and the French had taken steps to improve their defences and supplies. Wellington had to move fast as the armies of Marshals Marmont and Soult were threatening him. The fortress was assaulted on the night of 6-7 April, despite inadequate breaches in the fortifications and as a result, the main storming parties took huge casualties.

Although Badajoz was taken, the British lost nearly 5,000 men in one night and the survivors then went on a vengeful orgy of looting, rape and murder, which Wellington found difficult to control. He openly wept when he saw the huge pile of corpses on the main breach, but he had achieved his main objectives and now pursued Marmont away from Portugal and caught up with him at Salamanca.

Wellington was initially delayed at Salamanca by recently improved defences and was unwilling to start a battle. Conversely, Marmont wouldn't attack Wellington in a prepared position and consequently the two armies cautiously manoeuvred around each other for weeks. But on 22 July Marmont opened a gap between his vanguard and centre and Wellington attacked. The British 3rd Division pushed back the leading

“THE FRENCH STUBBORNLY RETREATED AND THE DAY BELONGED TO WELLINGTON. IT WAS SAID THAT HE DEFEATED AN ARMY OF 40,000 MEN IN 40 MINUTES”

French divisions while Wellington attacked Marmont's army from left to right. Marmont was wounded early in the battle and was forced to transfer command to his subordinates. Although an initial French attack on the British centre was successful, Wellington's reserve forces first stopped it and then they crushed the attackers. The French stubbornly retreated and the day belonged to the Duke of Wellington. It was said that he, “defeated an army of 40,000 men in 40 minutes.”

The French lost 7,000 casualties along with the same number captured, while the British lost 5,000. As a reward Wellington became a Marquis and entered Madrid on 12 August.

Onwards to Madrid and Burgos

The reasons for liberating the Spanish capital were politically motivated. The British government needed to provide a spectacular event that would send a message throughout Europe and Wellington needed to rest and resupply his army. The liberation soon turned sour, however, as there were still large French armies in the field. By not pursuing Marmont's army after Salamanca, Wellington had allowed the French to regroup behind the Ebro and once again concentrate against Wellington. The British had spent three weeks in Madrid and Wellington laid siege to Burgos with inadequate artillery and uncharacteristically failed to take the fortress despite launching five assaults against it.



With the French closing in, he called off the siege on 21 October and retreated all the way back to Ciudad Rodrigo, abandoning Madrid along the way. At the time it seemed a depressing defeat and appeared to be a withdrawal in a similar vein to Corunna and Talavera. However, his 1812 campaign meant that the French permanently abandoned southern Spain and in the long term helped to turn the tide of the Peninsular War.

In 1813, Wellington adopted a new strategy to eject the French from northern Spain. He aimed to advance along the French communication lines that ran northeast from the River Douro in north-central Spain to Bayonne in southern France. Along the way he isolated and then used Biscayan ports for his own communications and supplies. This would give the French no chance to regroup and the plan spectacularly worked. Between May and June 1813 he moved 100,000 men, 100 guns and other equipment 250 miles and moved his base to Santander on the Biscayan coast. He was now close to the French frontier and fought the retreating Marshal Jourdan and the erstwhile King of Spain Joseph Bonaparte at Vitoria on 21 June.

Wellington had the superior number of troops and planned to envelop the French between a bend in the Zamora River and the town of Vitoria. Although his tactics did not go quite according to plan, the French left and centre were broken after hard fighting and they descended into a disorderly retreat towards Pamplona at the cost of 6,000 casualties and 3,000 captured. Joseph's army fled to France and he left behind his substantial baggage train. This included 150 guns, expensive treasures and a war chest of £1 million.

The lure of such booty led the British troops to be distracted by plunder and they lost the chance to capture more French prisoners. Nonetheless, the victory led to the final ejection of the French from Spain and Wellington became a field marshal. Despite another difficult siege at San Sebastián, Wellington continued northwards and crossed the River Bidasoa into France on 7 October, and, by 1814, the French and their armies were being attacked from all quarters.

After being decisively defeated at Leipzig in October 1813, Napoleon himself had been forced to retreat into France and the continental allies entered Paris on 31 March 1814. On 12



"TROOPS UNDER WELLINGTON'S COMMAND WERE STUBBORN AND AT THE FARMHOUSE OF HOUGOUMONT THE LARGELY BRITISH GARRISON HELD OUT ALL DAY FROM FORCES TEN TIMES THEIR NUMBER"

■ Wellington had his boots cut lower to make them more comfortable while wearing trousers. His name would forever become synonymous with the style

April, having just fought a battle at Toulouse Wellington learned that Napoleon had abdicated. After years of campaigning, the Peninsular War was over.

THE HUNDRED DAYS & WATERLOO

Wellington was now an international superstar, titled 'Duke of Wellington', on 11 May 1814, and became a key diplomat at the Congress of Vienna to decide the future of post-Napoleonic Europe. However, Napoleon daringly escaped from his island exile on Elba and landed in France on 1 March 1815, to great acclaim from the French Army, and reinstalled himself as emperor. The allies, still at the Viennese Congress, declared war and sent Wellington to Belgium to take command of a mixed army of British, German, Dutch and Belgian troops that were stationed alongside a Prussian army under Field Marshal Gebhard Blücher. Before he left, Wellington was counselled by Tsar Alexander I of Russia, "It is for you to save the world again." Napoleon quickly assembled an army and invaded Belgium in June in order to break up the

coalition ranged against him, which he initially managed to do. The forces of Wellington and Blücher became separated by some distance and two battles were fought at Ligny and Quatre Bras before Wellington and Napoleon met in battle for the first time on the Mont-Saint-Jean escarpment on 18 June. Despite being two kilometres away from the town of Waterloo, this is what the battle would become known as.

Waterloo was an extremely bloody encounter, and, for most of the day, the armies were evenly matched with Napoleon's 73,000 men slightly outnumbering Wellington's 68,000 (of which, 25,000 were British and only 7,000 of those were Peninsular veterans). Between 11.30am and 8pm the artillery on both sides hardly stopped firing. Wellington fought a defensive battle, planning to stay in the same prepared positions for as long as possible until the Prussians could arrive and help Napoleon away from battle.

The Emperor's chief mistake that day was probably underestimating his opponent. Like his subordinate generals before him, he ordered numerous column assaults against the allied squares, hoping to pummel the enemy into retreat or as Wellington put it, "a pounding match". But troops under Wellington's command were stubborn and at the farmhouse of Hougomont the largely British garrison held out all day from forces ten times their number. Nonetheless, Napoleon's relentless attacks did begin to have an effect as the day wore on and the French captured the farm of La Haye Sainte in Wellington's centre.

Wellington himself was everywhere on the battlefield and, although he was engaged in the fight of his life, he remained calm. By 4pm, he could hear the Prussian guns approaching on

Did Wellington make mistakes during the Hundred Days in 1815 and if so what were they?



RORY MUIR:

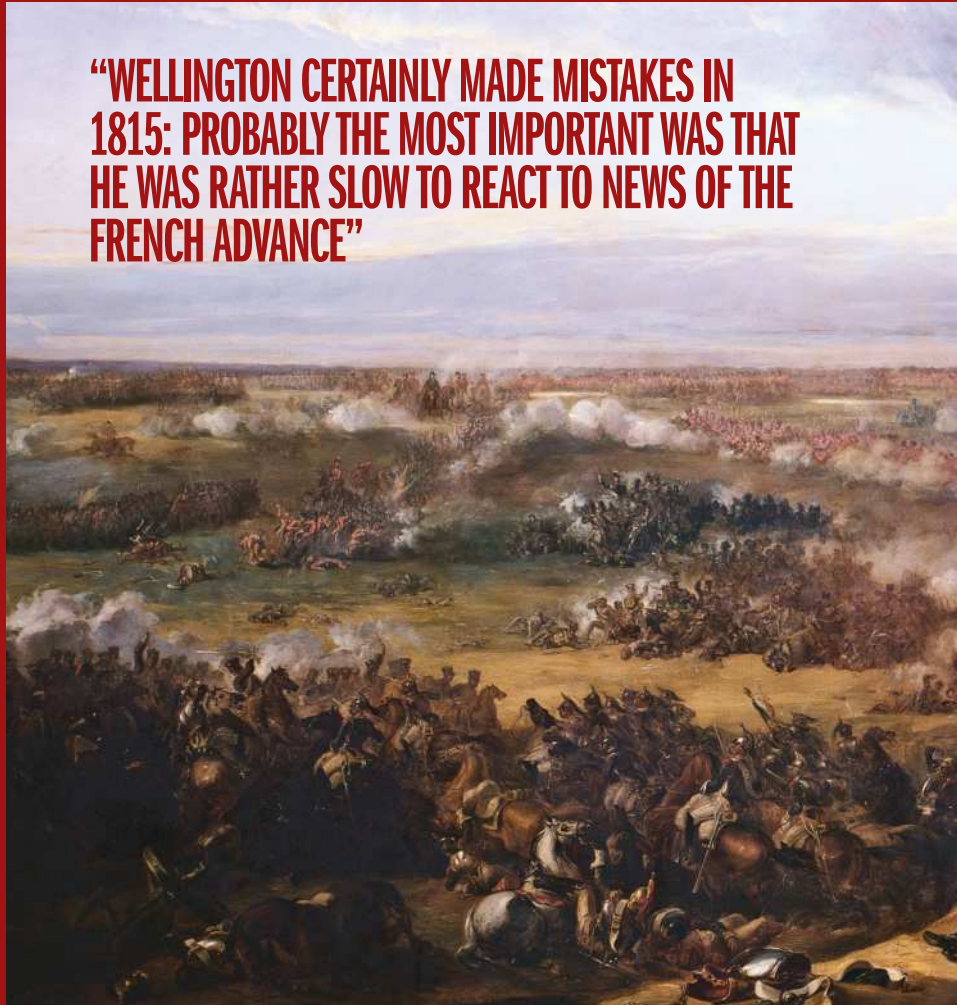
All generals make mistakes, and there has never been a campaign or a battle fought without mistakes being made on all sides, because waging war is extremely difficult. Probably the most important [mistake Wellington made] was that he was rather slow to react to news of the French advance. There had been many false alarms in the

preceding weeks, and he believed that the greatest risk of defeat faced by the allies would be if he or Blücher made a false move at the outset; but he should have sent orders for his troops to prepare to march sooner than he did.

Wellington's initial orders to I Corps (Prince of Orange) to concentrate around Nivelles would have removed Perponcher's division from the cross roads at Quatre Bras; and this aspect of these orders was fortunately ignored by Generals Constant Rebecque and Perponcher so that no harm was actually done. The retention of a significant force at Hal to protect the western flank of the army on the day of the battle of Waterloo is also often regarded as a mistake, although I think that there is at least an argument that it was a sensible precaution.

Finally, in the battle, there were inevitably a number of points which can be criticized, most significantly that the left flank, that is the part of the line to the east of the road from Quatre Bras that was occupied by Picton's division, should have been held in greater strength. But it is important not to lose perspective: Wellington made mistakes but he also got most things right, and he managed to regain the initiative and achieve a victory against a skilled and determined enemy who had seized the initial advantage.

"WELLINGTON CERTAINLY MADE MISTAKES IN 1815: PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT WAS THAT HE WAS RATHER SLOW TO REACT TO NEWS OF THE FRENCH ADVANCE"





■ This carbine and pistol are typical of those used by British cavalry against the French

his left and then chose to use his own troops to reinforce his centre and right. The Prussians were soon fully engaged and Napoleon's elite regiment the Imperial Guard collapsed in front of British volley fire.

The battle was won and Wellington allowed the Prussians to pursue the fleeing French. He knew how close he had come to defeat stating the next day that the battle was, "the nearest run thing you ever saw." The massive casualties, about 26,000 French, 7,000 Prussians and 17,000 in his own army, also disturbed him. Wellington himself lost all but one of his personal staff killed or wounded and said shortly afterwards, "I hope to God that I have fought my last battle." He also cried when he read the list of the dead.

Wellington fulfilled his prophecy and Waterloo was his last battlefield command. In its aftermath, Napoleon retreated back to France, abdicated a second time and was exiled, this time permanently, to the distant island of Saint

Helena under British guards, dying there in 1821. Wellington, who was the same age as his greatest foe, lived much longer until 1852 when he was given a huge state funeral. Through hard work, dogged campaigning and sheer guts and courage, Wellington had become one of the finest generals Britain has ever produced but he was surprisingly modest about his abilities. When asked who was the greatest military leader of his time, he generously replied, "In this age, in past ages, in any age, Napoleon!"

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■ The outcome of the Battle of Waterloo hung in the balance for most of 18 June and Wellington later described it as "the nearest run thing you ever saw"

STATE OF PLAY: 1814

FRANCE STANDS ON THE BRINK OF ANNIHILATION

Europe in 1814 was a continent tired of war. France lay in tatters after continual hammering from various Allied coalitions since the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars. Britain, Portugal and their Bourbon Spanish allies had thrown the French out of the Iberian Peninsula in the Peninsular Wars. Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, later to become immortalised at the Battle of Waterloo, led the Allied forces to victory and began to push into southern France in the beginning of the year.

On the other side of the country the French were again on the defensive. After the cataclysmic Battle of Leipzig in 1813, the Russians, Austrians, Swedes and Prussians pushed into north-east France, ready to end the French threat once and for all.

The vastly outnumbered French could not hope to contain the war on two fronts and after Paris fell in March, Napoleon abdicated and was exiled to Elba. After decades of bloodshed, the major European powers saw the need to reorganise the balance of power in Europe. By the summer a steady stream of kings, emperors, prime ministers, ambassadors and other representatives converged on Vienna to reshape the geographical and political landscape that had been shattered by Napoleon's ambitions.

While peace now reigned, powers like Austria were concerned that their enemy had simply shifted from France to the growing dominance of Russia and were forced to make concessions to maintain the balance of power. While the congress almost came to blows over the partition of Poland, the year ended with a tentative peace settling over the battle-scarred continent.

PEACE CELEBRATIONS

After the treaties of Fontainebleau and Paris were signed, the leaders of the Allied coalition travelled to England to celebrate the newfound peace. Sumptuous banquets, races at Ascot and a naval review entertained the great and good of Europe before the more serious business of the Congress of Vienna began.

BATTLE OF PARIS

By the end of March the forces of Russia, Austria and Prussia were hammering on the doors of the French capital. The Russians were fierce in their assaults and supported by the other powers, the city was taken after a day of heavy fighting. This was the first time a foreign army had marched into Paris in around 400 years.

NAPOLÉON ABDICATES

Surrounded on all sides but unwilling to admit his defeat, Napoleon calls for almost a million new soldiers to be levied. The army fails to materialise, and faced with mutiny from his army chiefs, the emperor is forced to step down. The Bourbon dynasty is swiftly restored.





A SCANDINAVIAN UNION

Norway began 1814 in a union with its neighbour, Denmark. Being allied with the French, the countries were subjected to British blockages until Norway became an independent country in May. The ambitious Swedish king, Charles XIII & II, saw an opportunity to gain power over the country and after a brief conflict became monarch of both states; although Norway would keep its own constitution and parliament.



STATE OF PLAY: 1814



RETURN OF THE POPE

Since 1808 the Papal States had been under French occupation. With the French Empire being dismantled, the Papal States were allowed to return to autonomous rule under Pope Pius VII who, on his return to the holy city, was hailed as a hero by the Italian people.



THE OPERETTA EMPEROR

COULD AN ISLAND HOLD AN EMPEROR'S INTEREST?
ELBA – AND EUROPE – WOULD SOON FIND OUT

On the evening of 28 April 1814, Napoleon embarked upon the barge of His Majesty's frigate *Undaunted*. The emperor was going into exile although in exile he would still be an emperor. But his empire, once stretching from the Atlantic to the Baltic, was to be reduced to an island of 224 square kilometres in the Tyrrhenian Sea, ten kilometres from Italy. According to the terms of the Treaty of Fontainebleau, Napoleon Bonaparte was to abdicate as Emperor of France and become Emperor of Elba instead.

Today, Elba is part of Italy but through history it has changed hands many times and, at the start of the 19th century, it had become a French possession. But under the terms of the treaty, Elba became the personal possession of Napoleon. Lying between Corsica and Italy, there's no record of Napoleon having visited in his youth but it was close enough to at least offer a familiar environment. Under the circumstances in France, it was the best he

■ *Napoleon leaving Elba to make his last, great throw of the dice*



could have hoped for but even so, he took his time getting there. First, Napoleon took eight days to reach Fréjus, on France's Mediterranean coast, after leaving Fontainebleau. The fallen emperor spent much of the journey travelling in disguise to avoid Royalist assassins and the harangues of ordinary people. The original plan had been for Napoleon to embark on the ship that was to take him into exile from St Tropez, but he insisted that it should be from Fréjus that he leave France. Fréjus was where he had landed, in 1799, after his return from Egypt, at the start of his extraordinary ascent to power. Now it would witness his fall. But even so, he could barely tear himself away. It was only when the captain of the *Undaunted*, Sir Thomas Ussher, arrived at the inn in Fréjus where he was staying to inform him that the barge was waiting that Napoleon could bring himself to leave.

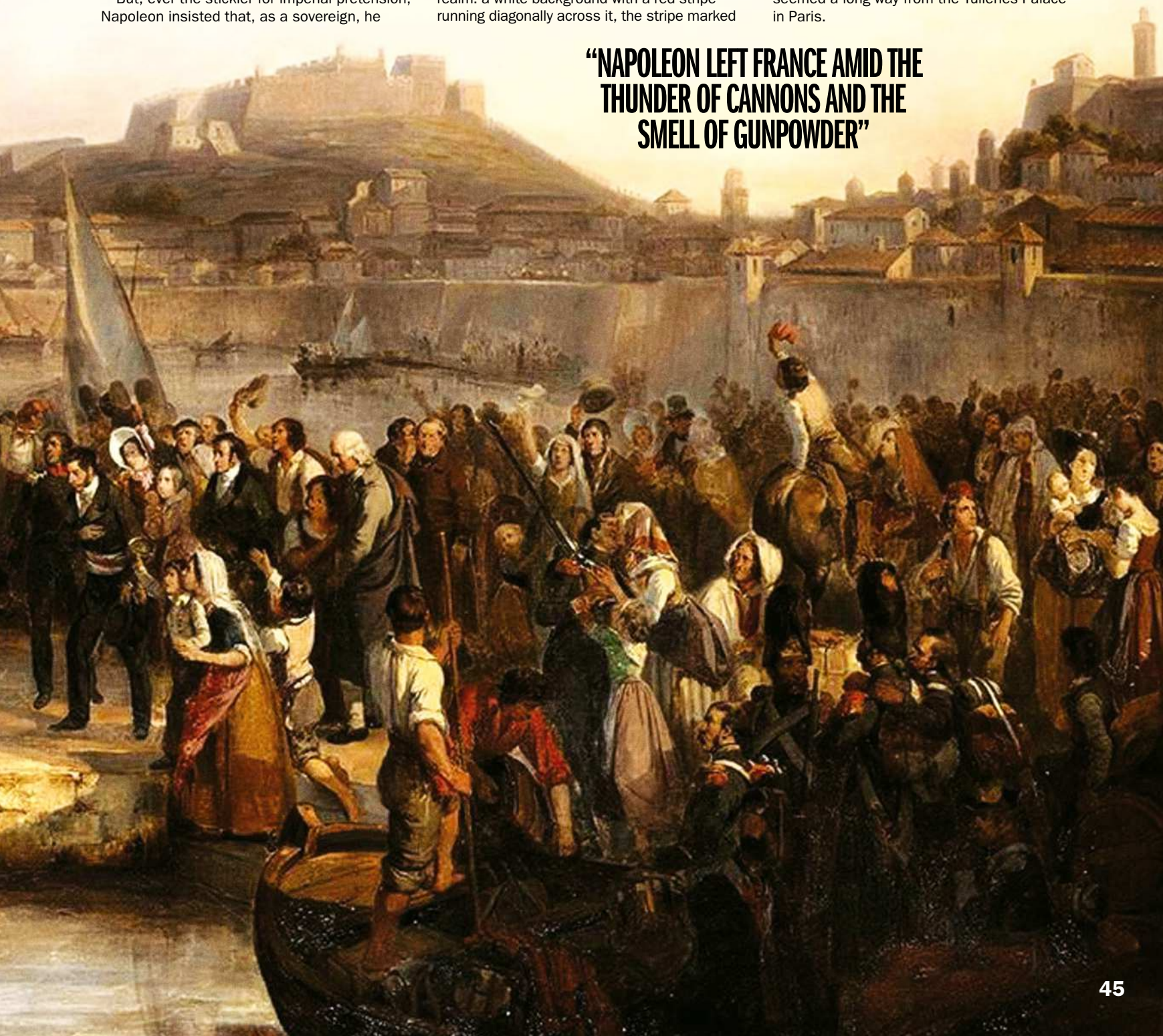
But, ever the stickler for imperial pretension, Napoleon insisted that, as a sovereign, he

be given a 21-gun salute upon boarding the *Undaunted*. Despite naval regulations stating there should be no gun salutes after sunset, the captain of the frigate acceded to his demands and Napoleon left France amid the thunder of cannons and the smell of gunpowder. Three days later, on 1 May, the *Undaunted* came within sight of Corsica. Napoleon came onto the bridge of the frigate and watched his homeland pass by. But there was to be no port of call there and, on the evening of 3 May, the *Undaunted* set anchor in Portoferraio, Elba's main town and port. The next day Napoleon came ashore to take possession of his new kingdom. The mayor, Pietro Traditi, gave Napoleon the keys to the island but the occasion rendered the poor man so nervous that he could not say a word.

Napoleon, with his usual attention to detail, had already designed a new flag for his island realm: a white background with a red stripe running diagonally across it, the stripe marked

by three golden bees. It remains the flag of Elba to this day. The population greeted their new ruler with enthusiasm, although that enthusiasm was newly come by. When the news had initially filtered through to the Elbans that they were being given as a gift to Napoleon, there had been some protests but these quickly died away as a perennially poor people were struck by the realisation that the emperor in exile would bring much needed business and employment to the island. The golden bees of the new flag were exactly what the island's inhabitants hoped for. So they crowded around their new ruler as he processed into Portoferraio, making his way to the church where a *Te Deum* was offered to God in thanksgiving for Napoleon's safe arrival. Then, the Emperor of Elba was shown to his new quarters: the *Biscotteria*, a biscuit factory that had been hastily converted into an imperial residence. For Napoleon, it must all have seemed a long way from the Tuileries Palace in Paris.

"NAPOLEON LEFT FRANCE AMID THE THUNDER OF CANNONS AND THE SMELL OF GUNPOWDER"





■ Napoleon bidding farewell to his guard at Fontainebleau as he prepares to leave for his exile on Elba

THE BEST LITTLE EMPEROR IN THE WORLD

At the height of his power, Napoleon had ruled an empire encompassing over 2 million square kilometres. Now he had 224. But they were going to be the best ruled 224 square kilometres in the world. On 5 May, the day after his arrival, Napoleon woke at 4am, went to inspect the defences of Portoferraio and did not return for breakfast until 10am. This was to be the mark of Napoleon's time on Elba: ceaseless activity and movement. A week later, Napoleon toured the island and selected a villa better suited to his eminence: the Palazzina dei Mulini, overlooking his new capital (these days it's a museum, commemorating the emperor's stay on Elba, complete with the 1,100 books that Napoleon, a voracious reader, brought from France).

As Emperor of Elba, Napoleon's routine was fairly strict. He would wake at four, read dispatches, dictate letters, look at the papers and walk in the garden before a nap and riding out to see the various building projects he had initiated on the island. Then came a late breakfast, at ten or eleven o'clock, followed by some time alone reading, bathing, and conversations with his staff. Sometime about four, Napoleon would normally go out in his calash, a light carriage, stopping to speak to any Elbans along the way who wished to petition their emperor. Returning to the Palazzina dei Mulini by the early evening, there would be a formal audience for visitors (there

was a steady stream of tourists, many from England, wanting to see for themselves this man who had held Europe in thrall for so long). Dinner was taken between six and eight, then Napoleon would play cards with his mother – who had come to Elba to share in her son's exile – or chess, before retiring between nine and ten.

For a man of the emperor's relentless energy, it's clear that the greatest danger he faced on Elba was boredom. To stave it off, Napoleon became involved in the tiniest detail of his Lilliputian realm: he organised rubbish collections, passed laws for the collection of night soil, regulated what gardeners should be paid, improved customs and excise, instituted plans to irrigate the plains of Lacona, decreed that valleys were to be reforested and olive trees planted, set up an inspectorate of roads and bridges, and decreed that no more than five children could sleep in a bed. The obsessive attention to detail that had seen Napoleon ask to see several years of the records of the laundry at the Tuileries Palace in Paris after being given a dirty napkin at dinner still drove the man. However, at some level Napoleon felt the futility of all this action poured into such a small realm, for his time on Elba was marked by an initial enthusiasm for a variety of building projects, only for him to abandon the project when faced with difficulties or the fact of his own boredom at what he was attempting to achieve.

Napoleon's difficulties were exacerbated by money worries. Under the terms of the Treaty of Fontainebleau, the restored Bourbon King of France, Louis XVIII, was supposed to

WIFE ABROAD

How to split an emperor from his empress and his heir

On Elba, Napoleon was joined by his mother, a sister and, for a couple of weeks, one of his mistresses. But the woman he really wanted to join him on the island, his wife, Marie Louise, never came. He had not seen her, nor their son, since 25 January 1814 but they had maintained intermittent contact by letter. With Napoleon Jr, Marie Louise had left France for Vienna, returning to her father, Emperor Francis of Austria. Napoleon certainly hoped to be reunited with Marie Louise and her letters show that at first she intended to join him in exile. But Francis and his advisors, notably Prince Metternich, subtly poisoned the rather

“HIS WIFE, MARIE LOUISE, NEVER CAME”

shallow well of Marie Louise's feelings for her husband. First, they brought her the news that Napoleon had been so grief-stricken when he heard of the death of his first wife, Joséphine, on 29 May 1814, that he had shut himself into his room for two days. Then Metternich instructed his aide, a one-eyed but handsome officer named Adam Albert von Neipperg to keep Marie Louise from going to Elba 'by any means whatsoever'. While they took the waters in spa town Aix-les-Bains, Napoleon wrote to her in ever more imperious terms that she should come to him. Marie Louise balked at this command and, returning to Vienna, she and von Neipperg became lovers, subsequently marrying and producing three children.



■ Napoleon's second wife, Marie Louise



■ The scathing cartoons that had helped to mobilise Britain against Napoleon did not stop with his exile to Elba

■ A later painting of Napoleon in exile on Elba by Leo von Klenze



FLAGGING IT

A new kingdom required a new flag, and Napoleon designed one

■ The flag that Napoleon designed

Once Napoleon arrived on Elba, he concerned himself with the minutiae of running the island, but he had already settled one outstanding item while sailing to the island: its flag. As Emperor of Elba, his new realm required a new flag and Napoleon designed it on the *Undaunted*. Ever the reader, he'd taken books on Elba with him, as well as a book showing the flags of Grand Duchy Tuscany, ancient and modern (Elba had been part of the Duchy before being given to France in 1802). The diagonal stripe echoed the flag of the House of Appiano, ancient rulers of Elba, while the bees represented Napoleon's claimed connection to the Merovingian kings of France, as golden bees were found on the tomb of Childeric I, the founder of the first French royal family, and bees often appear as symbols of Napoleon and his rule. While there's still disagreement about the exact meaning and derivation of the flag, the fact that Napoleon designed it himself is certain – and emblematic of his approach to ruling, whether it be an empire or Elba.



“RUMOURS OF ASSASSINATION THREATS MADE THEIR WAY BACK TO NAPOLEON THROUGH HIS INTELLIGENCE CHANNELS, LEAVING THE EMPEROR SO UNSETTLED THAT HE TOOK TO SLEEPING IN A DIFFERENT ROOM OF HIS PALACE EVERY NIGHT”

pay an annual stipend of two million francs to Napoleon to help cover his expenses. These were considerable. Napoleon had brought to Elba a large household of staff and servants, as well as 566 soldiers to act as his bodyguards. Nor was court ceremony and excess curtailed, but rather Napoleon imposed an etiquette on what he had renamed the Palais Impérial des Mulinì that resembled as closely as possible the protocols of the Tuileries Palace. Napoleon's major Elban expenses were his household and military – the administrative costs for running the household costing only ten per cent less than the military – and his income, from local taxes, excise duties, fisheries and salt mines, did not come close to matching his expenditures.

Napoleon had brought 500,000 francs with him on his journey into exile, to which nearly

another three and a half million were added. But his annual expenditure was between 1.5 and 1.8 million francs, while tax income was half that. The annual grant of two million francs from France would have bridged the financial gap, but Louis XVIII had no desire to send over a payment that he had had no part in negotiating, even if the finances of France would have allowed it. But Napoleon's wars had drained the country's financial resources; it seemed a bit much to deny others in order to subsidise the fallen emperor. Napoleon attempted to increase his income, sending troops to the town of Capoliveri when the inhabitants refused to pay their taxes, but there simply wasn't enough money in Elba to support Napoleon. Without the stipend from Louis XVIII, Napoleon would run out of money in just over two years unless he started making

some drastic cuts in his imperial style. A man with five valets could probably have reduced his expenses without too much difficulty, but that was not Napoleon's style. A reduction in his household would have reduced his imperial grandeur and for Napoleon, a man without the birth right to rule claimed by the other European rulers, the trappings of power were a necessity to reinforce the legitimacy of his place in the world – or rather at the top of it.

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

Financial worries were, however, not the main issue in Napoleon's decision to leave Elba. The Congress of Vienna had convened in November 1814 to decide the future shape of Europe and it soon became clear that the European powers were not prepared to leave Napoleon on Elba. Although officially cut off from communications with France and Europe, Napoleon had opened clandestine channels to bring him intelligence of the situation within France and of political developments, while the high-ranking tourists who flocked to see him on Elba were politely but thoroughly probed for the latest news. At the congress, the French foreign minister, Talleyrand, argued that Napoleon should be removed safely out of the way to one of the Azores, 1,400 kilometres from Europe, while other suggestions included St Lucia in the Caribbean and St Helena in the middle of the Atlantic.



■ Napoleon's coat of arms embossed on the wall of the Villa dei Mulinì



■ The front view of what Napoleon decreed was the Palais Impérial des Mulinì

■ Looking east past
Napoleon's villa to east Elba.
On a clear day, Italy is visible



Nor was it entirely clear that Napoleon would survive long enough to be moved to another, more distant, place of exile. Rumours of assassination threats made their way back to Napoleon through his intelligence channels, leaving the emperor so unsettled that he took to sleeping in a different room of his palace every night and, by the end of 1814, he only left the palace in the company of armed guards.

Meanwhile, news was filtering through to Elba that the restored Bourbon monarchy was not proving popular with the French people. While there was an element of Napoleon seeking the information he wanted to hear – that the French still loved him and would welcome him back – it was clear that Louis' restored regime was alienating some of the elements of French society that had supported Napoleon through his years in power. In particular, much of Napoleon's huge military was made redundant, and the rest put on half wages. This was a powerful constituency to alienate, particularly when ordinary soldiers generally remained loyal to the emperor, notwithstanding the way Napoleon spent their blood for his glory. The replacing of the tricolore with the white Bourbon flag antagonised Republicans, while the attempts of returning exiles to reclaim lands and possessions without recompense stoked fears of a return to the worst excesses of the ancien régime. With the Bourbons having squandered much of the political

capital that came with their restoration, Napoleon could easily convince himself that what he wanted, conditions conducive to his return to power, had come about.

What's more, by the end of December 1814, Napoleon had become so concerned about his future that he met the British representative on Elba, Colonel Sir Neil Campbell, to tell him that he would resist by force any attempt to remove him from the island. The Congress of Vienna lasted from November 1814 to June 1815, but the diplomats shaping the new Europe should perhaps have given thought to the primary impulse of the man they had left languishing on Elba: for Napoleon, always, the best form of defence was to attack.

Quite when Napoleon decided to return to France and make a renewed bid for the throne is unknown, for the decision lay in his innermost heart, which he kept apart from the public face he showed his companions. It's likely the hope of return had gone with him into exile, but by the first months of 1815, he had made the decision. When Campbell left for Italy on 16 February (to visit his doctor or his mistress, or both), the coast was clear – literally so, since Campbell had sailed aboard his ship, the HMS Partridge, that had been detailed to keep a discreet watch on the island. The same day, Napoleon ordered that his brig, Inconstant, be made ready with supplies and painted to resemble a British ship. The camouflage proved prescient, for a week later, the Partridge returned, anchoring in Portoferraio harbour on the evening of 23

February. Campbell was still in Italy, but he had dispatched his boat back to Elba to check all was well, and the eagle still in his eyrie. On seeing the approach of the Partridge, Napoleon then ordered the Inconstant out to sea, and set his soldiers to work gardening around his villa so that everything would appear as normal to the approaching soldiers. On 24 February the captain of the Partridge brought some tourists ashore, checked that Napoleon was still in residence and, satisfied, weighed their anchor and set sail. For a naval man, he seems to have been singularly unobservant.

The next day, Napoleon met the island's officials and told them he was leaving. The departure was set for the evening of Sunday 26 February. Napoleon left the Palais Impérial des Mulini at 7pm and crowds accompanied his carriage down to the harbour. Followed by a press of small vessels, Napoleon was rowed out to the Inconstant and went aboard. Alongside the brig were six other vessels. The small flotilla was carrying about 1,000 men, 40 horses and four cannons. With such an army Napoleon was going to try to win back France.

Standing on the bridge of the Inconstant, Napoleon looked over the sea towards France. "The die is cast," he said. The emperor was, indeed, about to make his last, desperate throw for power. Amid quiet winds, the convoy made slow progress but as the sun rose on 1 March 1815, Napoleon saw, coming over the horizon, what he had longed to see during his exile on Elba: France.

■ Europe had been at war for over two decades, but Napoleon's return meant that war would return until the emperor was finally defeated





THE GREAT GAMBLE

FEARFUL AND BORED ON ELBA, NAPOLEON DECIDED TO RISK EVERYTHING ON A FINAL BID TO WIN BACK FRANCE AND DEFEAT THE ALLIES

On 1 March 1815, Napoleon stepped once again on to French soil. His guard held the gangway in place so he could pass dry-shod from his boat. There was no one there to meet him. His ship, the *Inconstant*, and its small accompanying flotilla had moored at Golfe Juan, between Antibes and Cannes, in the early afternoon and the would-be emperor had come ashore in the evening, making camp in an olive grove. The aim was to get to Paris as quickly as possible, but to do so without provoking a civil war. Napoleon was basing his return on popular legitimacy, and a people that had quickly tired of the restored Bourbons. But Napoleon knew the will for his return would quickly evaporate if he brought civil strife in his wake. So he ordered his officers to go ahead, with strict instructions that no shots were to be fired. If the people did not welcome him, his return would be a failure.

But, at first, the people weren't quite sure what to do. Provence was strongly monarchist in sympathies, so rather than marching to the provincial capital, Aix-en-Provence, Napoleon took to the hills, taking the road to Grasse. The mayor of Grasse, having only five muskets in the town, surrendered. Although speed was essential, Napoleon decided to continue north on the mountain paths avoiding any centres of population until Grenoble. But to do so, he had to abandon his beloved cannons and forsake his carriage. For the long march north, the emperor made do with a mule, or walked with his troops. The Route Napoleon covers over 300 kilometres and today it's one of the great cycling routes in the world. Then, the emperor and his small party walked and rode the track through the vast mountain pastures and plateaux, over ridges and down into ravines, covering the distance in six days.

The turning point came at Laffrey, south of Grenoble. By that time, the news that Napoleon had returned had spread and the 5th Regiment of the Line was ordered to stop him. Its commander drew his men up in battle order, their muskets at the ready. What happened next entered the Napoleonic legendarium. The returning emperor supposedly placed himself in full view of the 5th Regiment and invited them to shoot. The troops apparently threw down their guns and mobbed him, joining with Napoleon's own guards for the march to Paris. A slightly more prosaic account suggests that it was the emperor's rapid-fire questions that kept the commander of the 5th off balance until Napoleon could bring the soldiers round to his side. Whatever the exact detail, this was the first occasion during Napoleon's return that soldiers of the regular army deserted to his side and, as such, it marked a key change in his fortunes. As Napoleon himself said, "Before Grenoble I was only an adventurer. After Grenoble, I was a Prince."

THE FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE

Having reached Grenoble, Napoleon rested his men for 36 hours. News by now had reached Paris of the emperor's return. Louis XVIII, plagued with arthritis, received the news sitting on his couch, his legs wrapped in sheepskins. Reading the dispatch, he hid his face with his hands. But there was still hope for the restored Bourbon monarchy, and that in the redoubtable shape of Marshal Ney, one of Napoleon's most trusted and probably his bravest general. But Ney had been one of the men who had told Napoleon that his time in power was over and that he should accept exile on Elba. After the Bourbon Restoration, Ney had been accepted

THE HUNDRED DAYS

● 26 FEBRUARY 1815

ESCAPE FROM ELBA
Napoleon leaves exile on Elba aboard the ship *Inconstant*. He is attempting to regain the throne with seven ships and a thousand men.

● 1 MARCH 1815

NAPOLEON LANDS IN FRANCE
Napoleon disembarks at Golfe Juan, between Antibes and Cannes, and spends the night camped by the beach.

● 2 MARCH 1815

THE MARCH NORTH
Napoleon begins his march, heading north towards Grenoble by mountain paths and tracks.

● 7 MARCH 1815

CRISIS AT LAFFREY
Faced with soldiers of the 5th Regiment of the Line tasked with stopping him, Napoleon dares the soldiers to shoot their emperor. They join him instead.

by Louis XVIII as a general of the new royalist army and, hearing the news of Napoleon's return, Ney loudly proclaimed that he would apprehend the erstwhile emperor and bring him back to Paris in an iron cage.

But as Ney marched south from Paris to intercept Napoleon, he received a message from his former commander, telling him that if he would defect then Napoleon would once more receive him. With the spectre of civil war filling his mind, Ney forswore his new allegiance and returned to his old one, adding his 6,000 troops to the rapidly swelling ranks following Napoleon north on what was becoming a triumphal progress towards Paris.

With his soldiers either vacillating or deserting, Louis XVIII decided on the better part of valour. At midnight on 19 March, he left Paris, heading with his entourage north and east, into Belgium. A day later, on 20 March, Napoleon entered Paris and took up residence once again at the Tuileries. The eagle had returned and the Emperor was emperor once more. It had taken less than three weeks and not a shot had been fired. The first part of the great gamble had succeeded beyond even Napoleon's expectations. A rhyme published in Paris shortly after his return traces Napoleon's trajectory over the previous 20 days:

*The Tiger has broken out of his den
The Ogre has been three days at sea
The Wretch has landed at Fréjus
The Buzzard has reached Antibes
The Invader has arrived in Grenoble
The General has entered Lyon
Napoleon slept at Fontainebleau last night
The Emperor will proceed to the Tuileries today.
His Imperial Majesty will address his loyal
subjects tomorrow.*

But while his return might have been welcomed in France, it was greeted with considerably less delight in Vienna. There, the Congress called by the Powers to decide the shape of post-Napoleonic Europe learned that they would have to deal with Napoleon again before they got on with the business of sharing out power. However, with the representatives of Britain, Prussia, Russia and Austria all present, and refocused by the news of Napoleon's return, the bickering that had slowed the Congress over the previous few months was abruptly put aside. The time had come to "crush the ogre once and for all". Each nation agreed to provide 150,000 troops – some 600,000 in all. Napoleon himself was declared an outlaw – and the penalty for being put outside the law was death.

Desperately trying to buy some time, Napoleon sent emissaries to the Tsar and the Austrian Emperor pledging that he would

■ *Napoleon's nemesis:*
Arthur Wellesley, 1st
Duke of Wellington



**"THE EAGLE HAD RETURNED AND
THE EMPEROR WAS EMPEROR
ONCE MORE. IT HAD TAKEN LESS
THAN THREE WEEKS AND NOT A
SHOT HAD BEEN FIRED"**

13 MARCH 1815

OUTLAW EMPEROR
The participants at the Congress of Vienna, hearing of Napoleon's return, declare him an outlaw.

14 MARCH 1815

NEY SWITCHES SIDES
Having promised to bring Napoleon back to Paris in an iron cage, Marshal Ney defects to the side of his erstwhile emperor, taking 6,000 troops with him.

17 MARCH 1815

THE POWERS AWAKE
At the Congress of Vienna, a Seventh Coalition is formed to defeat Napoleon once and for all. Britain, Prussia, Russia and Austria each promise to contribute 150,000 men towards his defeat.

19 MARCH 1815

THE KING FLEES
At midnight, Louis XVIII leaves Paris and heads north towards Belgium and a renewed exile.

20 MARCH 1815

THE EAGLE RETURNS TO HIS EYRIE
Napoleon re-enters Paris and takes up residence at the Tuileries Palace. The official start of the Hundred Days.

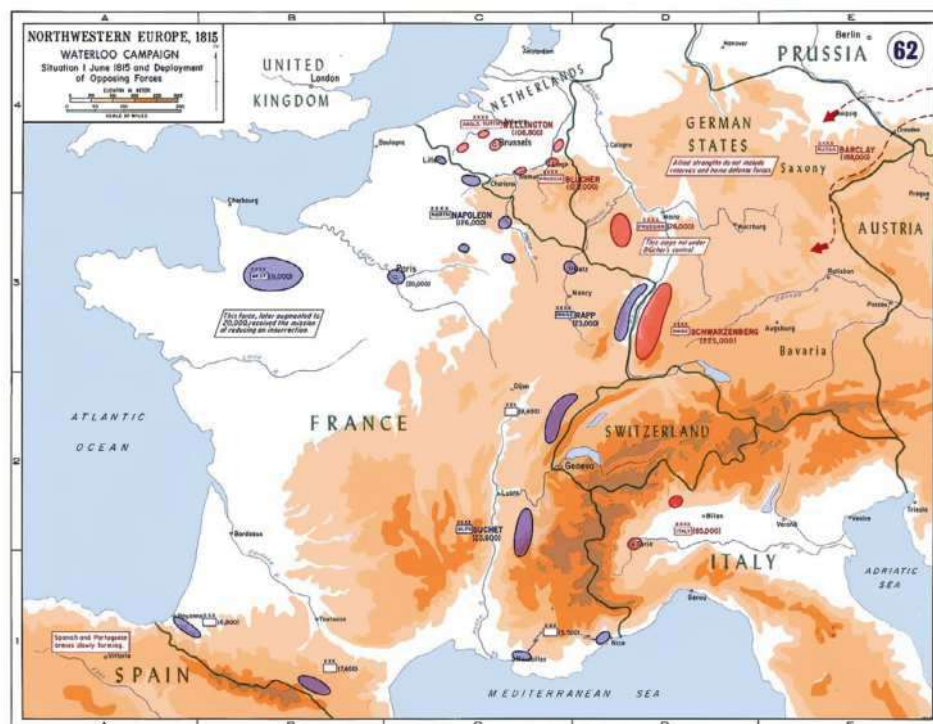
4 APRIL 1815

NAPOLEON TRIES FOR TIME
Having regained the throne, Napoleon wrote, in his own hand, to the kings of Europe promising them that he had no more wish for war. Not surprisingly, they did not believe him.



■ Marshal Ney, Napoleon's bravest general, but one whose errors contributed largely to the defeat at Waterloo

■ Below: How the armies of Europe stood at the beginning of June just before the start of the Waterloo campaign



“THE FRENCH HAD ACCEPTED THEIR OLD EMPEROR BACK BUT, WITH THE ALLIES FORMING A SEVENTH COALITION DEDICATED TO BRINGING A FINAL END TO NAPOLEON’S REGIME, A WAR-WEARY PEOPLE COULD BEGIN TO SEE THE LOOMING CLOUDS OF FRESH CONFLICT”

accept France’s new boundaries. As he asked, “Can one be as fat as I am and have ambition?” To shore up his legitimacy, Napoleon invited the people to vote on a new constitution that had been drawn up by Benjamin Constant, a former foe but a man widely respected in France. The constitution, which if it had continued promised something akin to a constitutional monarchy rather than the untrammelled dictatorial power of Napoleon’s heyday, was accepted but the turnout was much lower than in previous plebiscites. The French had accepted their old emperor back but, with the Allies forming a Seventh Coalition dedicated to bringing a final end to Napoleon’s regime, a war-weary people began to see the looming clouds of fresh conflict. In his heart, Napoleon had always known that he would only remain emperor by right of arms. With the government settled as much in his favour as possible, he set about putting the country back on to a war footing.

THE ROAD TO WATERLOO

With the Seventh Coalition ready to amass 600,000 troops against him, Napoleon was faced with a choice. He could either wait in Paris, assembling and arming his own army, and then embark upon a long war of attrition, hoping that the French would launch a guerilla war upon the lines of communication of the Allied armies as they marched into the country, as the Spanish had done during the long and bloody years of the Peninsular War. Or he could attack.

Being Napoleon, the choice was clear. But the only armies available for Napoleon to attack were those of the British and the Prussians, stationed on the north-east frontier of France in Belgium. The Austrians and the Russians were marching, but it would be weeks before they could get to France. Having won the first throw of the dice on his return, Napoleon doubled down.

4 APRIL 1815

WELLINGTON RETURNS
The Duke of Wellington arrives in Brussels to take command of the Allied army.

13 MAY 1815

PREPARATIONS BEGIN
Napoleon orders a secret report on the rivers and canals, and bridges, of the frontier region between France and Belgium. He is beginning to plan in earnest for his attack.

7 JUNE 1815

THE BLACKOUT
Napoleon seals the border with Belgium to ensure that news of the concentration of his forces just south of the border does not leak out to the Allies.

14 JUNE 1815

THE ARMY IS ASSEMBLED
Napoleon’s Armée du Nord concentrates around Beaumont in France, near the border with Belgium, ready to attack. Napoleon himself joins the army with the Imperial Guard.

15 JUNE 1815

THE DIE IS CAST (AGAIN)
The French armies cross the border into Belgium and head north, aiming to separate, and separately defeat, the armies of Wellington and Blücher.

16 JUNE 1815

THE BATTLE OF LIGNY
Napoleon attacks Blücher’s army at Ligny and forces it into a withdrawal, but he does not destroy it.



■ The Battle of Waterloo

He would attack Wellington and Blücher, and aim to win such a decisive victory that it would topple the government in Britain, putting in its place one more willing to negotiate with him, and cause such splits in the Seventh Coalition as to break it asunder. Besides, by going on to the attack, it meant that the war would not be fought on French soil.

By early May, Napoleon had made his decision. Conscription was re-imposed. The Napoleonic propaganda machine started up again, claiming that Napoleon required the service of the next cohort of young French men to protect France against the aggression of the other European powers. The material for war – munitions, horses, cannons, fodder – was prepared, but all in the conditions of strictest secrecy. For Napoleon had decided upon his grand strategy. Although, on its own, his Armée du Nord, which numbered 128,000 men, was outmatched by the two armies commanded by Wellington and Blücher (comprising 106,000 and 128,000 men respectively), Napoleon aimed to strike at the gap between the two Allied armies, keeping them apart and holding one force down with his reserves while he

defeated the other, before turning all his strength upon the remaining army. This was Napoleon's strategy of the central position and he had used it with great success in the past. Besides, he was well aware that the battle-hardened troops Wellington had led to victory in the Peninsular War had been dispatched to America to fight in the War of 1812, leaving Wellington in command of a mixed Anglo-Dutch army of unproven worth. As for General Blücher, Napoleon regarded him as nothing more than a hussar, that is a dunderhead cavalryman with as much subtlety as a cannonball.

From the excellent intelligence he had received from supporters in Belgium, Napoleon knew that Wellington's and Blücher's armies were quite widely spread. More importantly, he had also established that each army's lines of communication ran in different directions: Wellington's north to the Channel ports, Blücher's east to Liège and the Rhine. Any army making a withdrawal will tend to do so along its lines of communication, which meant that any defeat he inflicted on either Wellington or Blücher would have the effect of driving the two Allied armies further apart – exactly what he was aiming to do.

But for this strategy to work, Napoleon needed to fool the enemy as to his intentions and, for this, conditions of strictest secrecy were necessary. From 7 June, he sealed France's north-eastern frontier, stopping the post, closing the border to travellers and preventing fishing boats leaving French ports. Under cover of this

intelligence blackout, Napoleon concentrated his forces near the border by 14 June, while the garrisons at Dunkirk and Lille made feints to suggest an attack on Ostend, thus drawing Wellington back towards the Channel to guard his rear. The first part of Napoleon's strategy had been a success. Now it was time to strike.

THE BATTLES BEGIN

On 15 June, the French attacked. The Armée du Nord marched into Belgium. As news filtered through to Wellington and Blücher, they both made grave tactical errors. Blücher ordered his army to concentrate at Sombreffe, although this position was near the already assembled main French forces, leaving the Prussians vulnerable to being destroyed before they could properly deploy. As for Wellington, he was completely fooled by the feint towards Ostend and his first orders were for his army to cover his lines of communication, thus drawing further away from Blücher, the target of Napoleon's intended first blow. The Allies had made two grave errors before battle had even begun. Napoleon normally only needed one.

However, an even greater objective had been within Napoleon's grasp. Marshal Ney, advancing north on the road towards Brussels, came to the village of Quatre Bras, which controlled the east-west road connecting Wellington and Blücher's armies. Unbeknown to him, Quatre Bras was held by just 4,000

“NAPOLEON HAS HUMBUGGED ME, BY GOD! HE HAS GAINED TWENTY-FOUR HOURS' MARCH”

16 JUNE 1815

THE BATTLE OF QUATRE BRAS

Marshal Ney, leading the left wing of the French advance, attacks Wellington's army at Quatre Bras but is unable to take the village.

17 JUNE 1815

RETREAT AND REDEPLOYMENT

Fearful of being outflanked, Wellington extricates his army from Quatre Bras. He takes up a new position at Mont-Saint-Jean, south of a village called Waterloo.

17 JUNE 1815

BLÜCHER'S PROMISE

General Blücher retreats north, maintaining contact with Wellington's army, and gives his word that he will send reinforcements for the battle the next day.

18 JUNE 1815

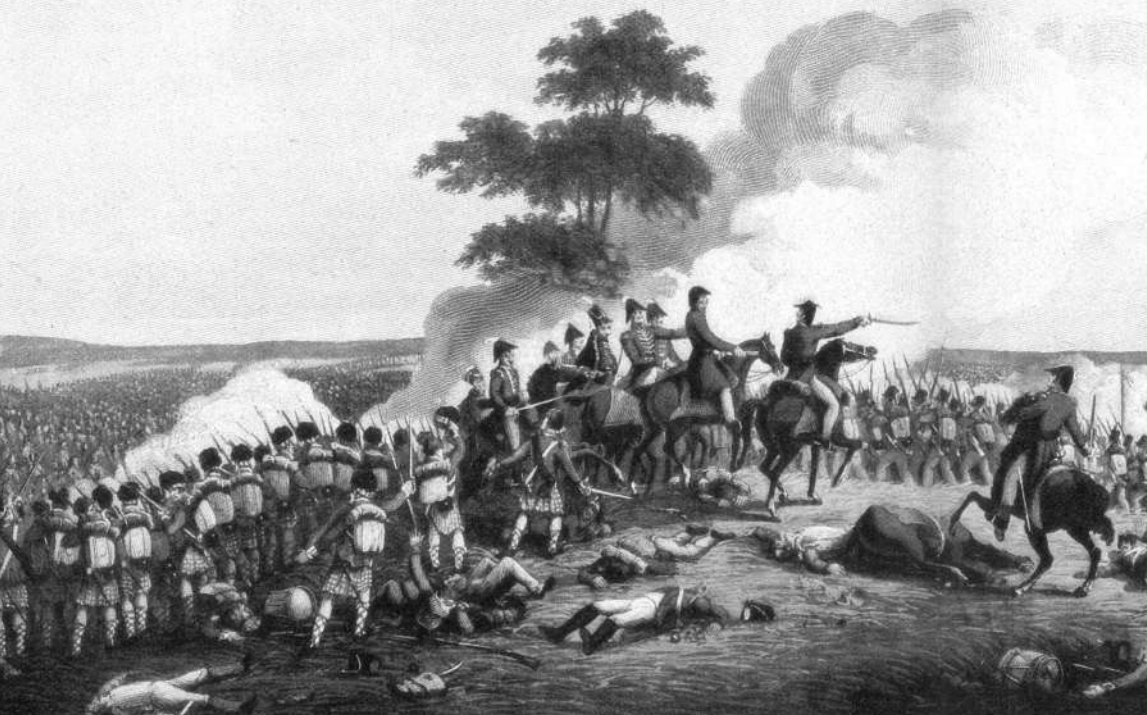
THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO

The climactic battle of the Napoleonic Wars is, as Wellington later admitted, “the nearest run thing you ever saw in your life”.

18 JUNE 1815

THE BATTLE OF WAVRE

The French right wing attempts to stop the Prussian Army joining with Wellington. Although the French win the tactical victory, they are unable to prevent Blücher sending Wellington the reinforcements that turned the Battle of Waterloo.



■ The leader of the Prussian army, General Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher



men, whereas Ney had 50,000 under his command. However, fearful of Wellington's ability to hide troops behind cover, Ney stopped outside Quatre Bras for the night rather than attempting to take it. The Allied officer holding Quatre Bras had, in fact, directly disobeyed Wellington's order to withdraw to the north-east when he saw Ney approaching, reasoning that he was in possession of more information than headquarters. This decision, by Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar, was to prove crucial.

In Brussels, Wellington was attending the Duchess of Richmond's ball when news of the whereabouts of the French army finally reached him in the early hours of 16 June. The realisation was sudden. "Napoleon has humbugged me, by God! He has gained twenty-four hours march on me." When asked what he intended to do, Wellington said, "I have ordered the army to concentrate on Quatre Bras; but we shall not stop him there, and if so, I must fight him here." The Duke pointed to the map, just south of a village called Waterloo.

As for Blücher, by noon of 16 June he had assembled his army along the line of the Ligny Brook over an 11-kilometre front. Wellington rode to meet Blücher there and promised to send reinforcements if he was not attacked himself. But for Napoleon, seeing the Prussian army drawn up in ranks on the far side of the Ligny Brook was an irresistible invitation to attack. At 2.30pm on 16 June, he gave the order. At about the same time, 11 kilometres

to the east at Quatre Bras, Marshal Ney finally launched his attack on the village, to which Wellington had been rushing reinforcements through the night and morning.

Thus two battles, at Ligny and Quatre Bras, began almost simultaneously, with Napoleon fighting Blücher at Ligny and Ney attempting to defeat Wellington at Quatre Bras. Not knowing that further troops had reinforced the Allied position at Quatre Bras, Napoleon was expecting a swift victory by Ney and for the marshal to then march east and deliver the coup de grâce to Blücher's army by attacking its flank. But with Wellington pouring troops into Quatre Bras, and leading the defence himself, Ney made no headway. If Napoleon was to defeat Blücher's army and then turn on Wellington, he would have to win the victory with the troops available to him.

He nearly did. By 7pm the Prussian army had been badly mauled and Blücher ordered it to retreat, personally leading a cavalry charge to buy his retreating army time. In that charge, Blücher's horse was killed and the Prussian general was pinned under it, while waves of French cavalry swirled around him, with only one aide staying by his side. It was only when the battle moved away that the aide managed to free his general and take Blücher to safety.

However, Blücher's attack had bought his army time, allowing it to retreat in reasonably good order. Napoleon had won a victory, but not a crushing one. When Blücher eventually made it back to his headquarters he countermanded suggestions that the Prussians should withdraw to the east, saying that honour required they continue to support Wellington. This was to prove the single most important decision of the entire campaign.

Hearing of the Prussian withdrawal, Wellington realised that his own position was untenable. He had to withdraw, but to where? Wellington sent a messenger to Blücher, saying he would stand and fight at Mont-Saint-Jean if Blücher could promise to send him reinforcements. Receiving this message, Blücher gave his word: he would not let Wellington down. Throughout 17 June, Wellington drew his troops back from Quatre Bras to take up their new positions at the site he had selected for battle, while Napoleon's troops advanced through a thunderstorm.

As the sun set on 17 June, all the elements were drawing into place for the climactic battle of the Napoleonic Wars. As for Napoleon, little did he know that he would soon go from emperor to adage, for on the morrow he would meet his Waterloo.

- **21 JUNE 1815**
NAPOLEON IN PARIS
Napoleon arrives in Paris and attempts to rally his men but political support is draining away from him.
- **22 JUNE 1815**
THE EMPEROR ABDICATES
Napoleon abdicates for the second time in favour of his four-year-old son.
- **29 JUNE 1815**
NAPOLEON FLEES
Napoleon and his entourage leave Paris, heading westwards, with possible plans to sail to America.
- **3 JULY 1815**
CEASEFIRE
The French sue for a ceasefire following the defeat of a French army at the Battle of Issy.
- **8 JULY 1815**
THE BOURBONS ARE BACK
Louis XVIII is restored as king of France. The official end of the Hundred Days.
- **15 JULY 1815**
NAPOLEON SURRENDERS
Napoleon hands himself over to the captain of HMS Bellerophon, hoping that the British will prove more clement to him than the Prussians (Blücher wanted to hang Napoleon).
- **16 OCTOBER 1815**
ST HELENA
Napoleon finds that British clemency means exile in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. This is an exile from which he will not return.

THE STATES OF EUROPE in 1815.

English Miles

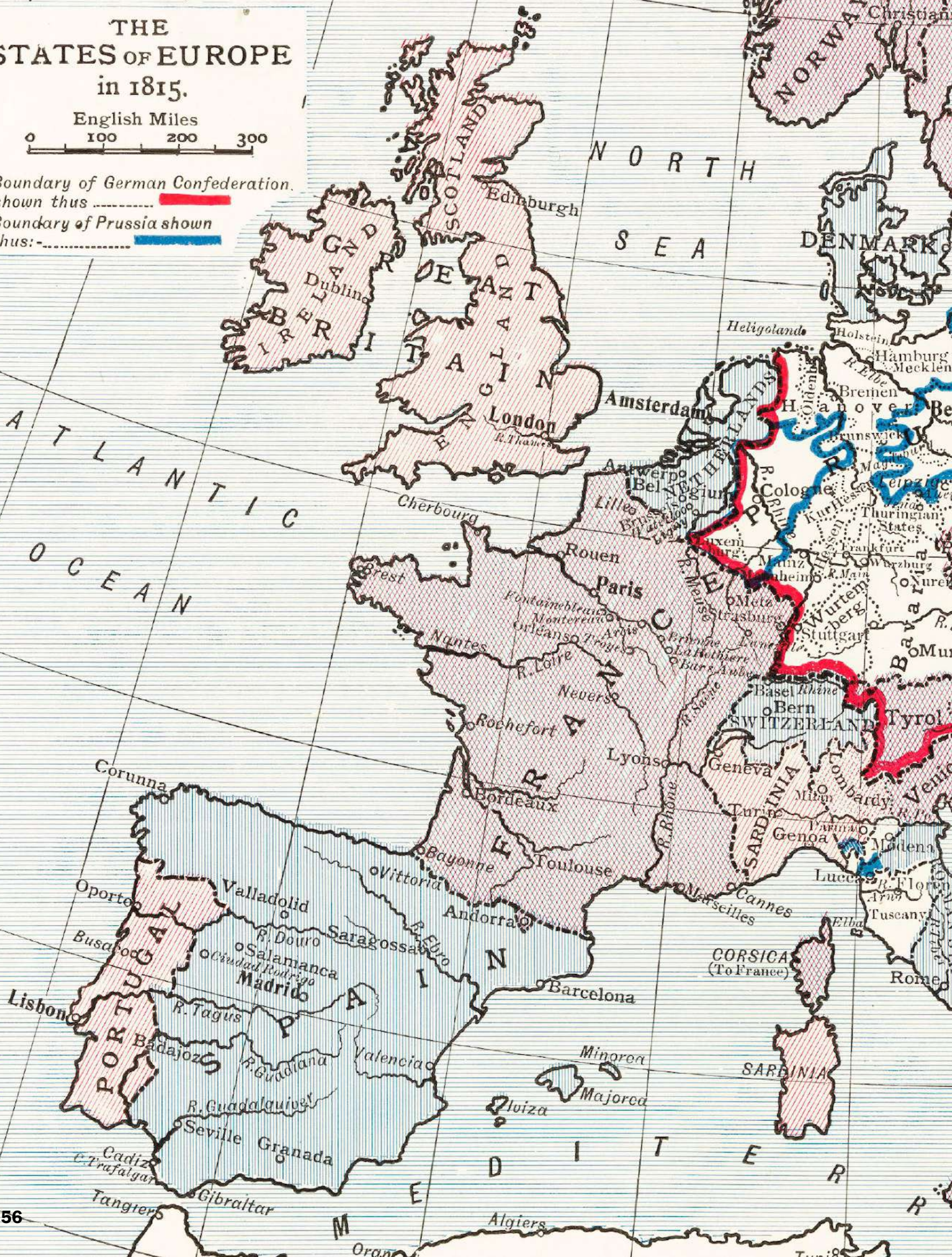


Boundary of German Confederation shown thus

Boundary of Prussia shown thus:

ATLANTIC OCEAN

NORTH SEA





Battle begins

62 COMMANDERS WHO DECIDED THE FATE OF EUROPE

Meet the courageous men who fought at the Battle of Waterloo

74 THE BATTLE OF THE THREE ARMIES

Find out how Europe raised a million-man army to defeat Napoleon

82 HIGH TIDE AT WATERLOO

With his dream of conquest vivid as ever, Napoleon prepared his attack

84 BLOODY FIREFIGHT AT HOUGOU MONT

Prince Jérôme's fixation cost him valuable time and manpower

88 FRENCH FORCES FORWARD

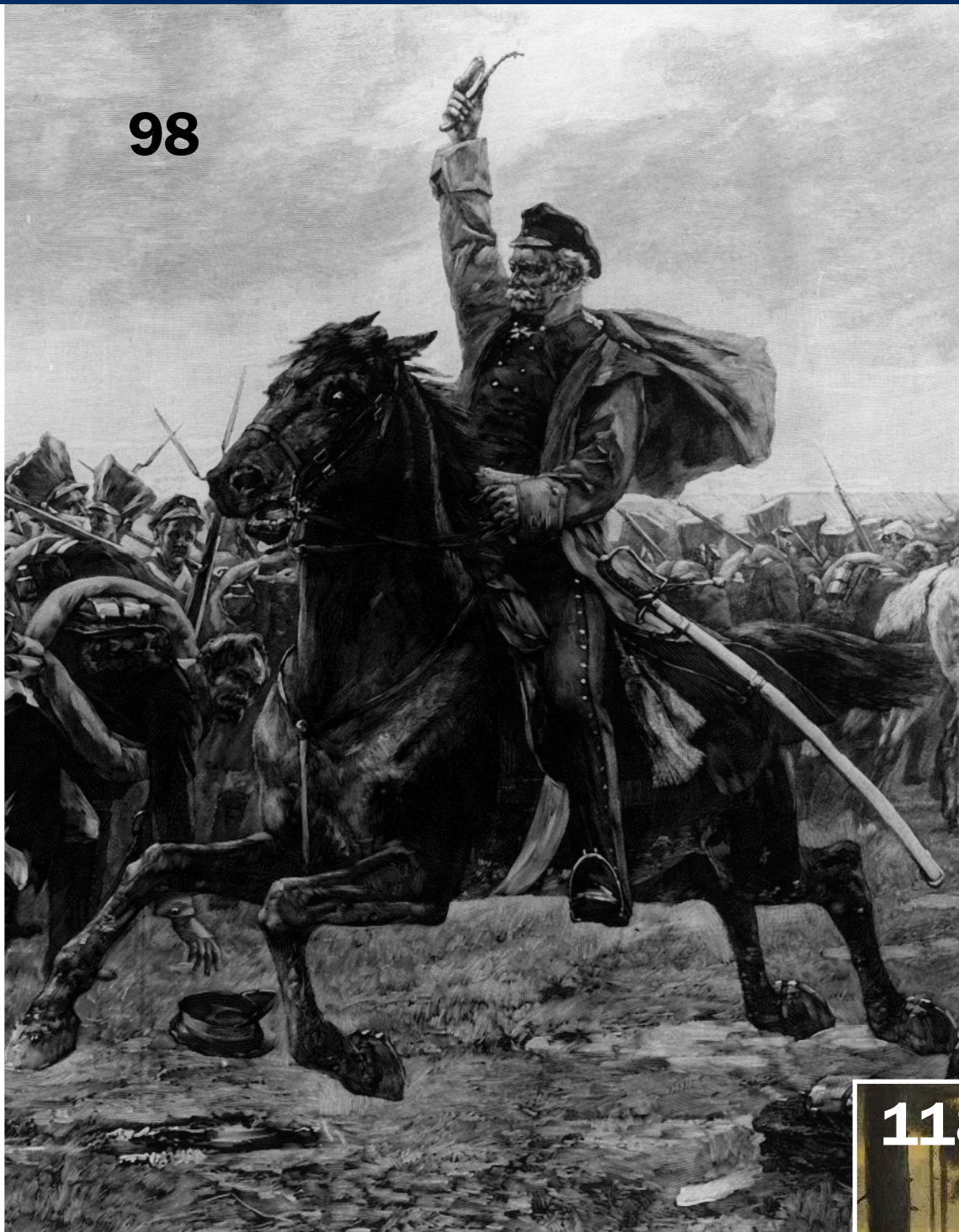
As the battle for Hougoumont raged, Napoleon ordered his men onward

92 ON THE BATTLEFIELD: HOUGOU MONT

The coalition was left to ride in and salvage the afternoon for Wellington



98



94 MARSHAL NEY'S MISCALCULATION

Napoleon's left-wing commander sent waves of cavalry forward to his enemies

98 PRUSSAINS ON THE FIELD

The weight of the Prussians pressed Napoleon to risk his bid for power

102 ON THE BATTLEFIELD: LA HAYE SAINTE

The coalition had a choice: hold out against the offensive or be slaughtered

104 HELLISH STRUGGLE AT LA HAYE SAINTE

The King's German legion held a farmhouse against enemy assaults

108 RUPTURE AND REGRET

With Wellington vulnerable, Napoleon summoned his old guard and attacked

114 AN EMPEROR'S END

After nearly claiming the world for himself, Napoleon faced defeat

118 THE SPOILS OF WAR

After almost 25 years of war with Napoleon, what did the nations win?




94



118





United in purpose
and victory, the Duke of
Wellington, Gebhard Leberecht
von Blücher and other Allied
commanders had won what would
become one of history's most
famous and decisive battles. It
was a turning point for Europe
that would ultimately dictate
the course of world history
that followed.

COMMANDERS WHO DECIDED THE FATE OF EUROPE

WITH FRANCE RESURGENT AS A MILITARY POWER,
NAPOLEON AND WELLINGTON PREPARED TO FACE EACH
OTHER WITH A HOST OF COURAGEOUS MEN BEHIND THEM

In the bloodied crucible that is war, some men are crushed by fear while others thrive on it. Throughout history such valiant soldiers have often made superb military leaders, acquitting themselves with boundless courage on many a body-strewn field. However, it is rare to find more than a few such warriors facing each other in a single battle, yet this was indeed the case on Sunday 18 June 1815, when two formidable European armies clashed on a rain-sodden strip of land outside the small town of Waterloo in what is today Belgium.

While figures such as Napoleon and the duke of Wellington require no introduction, the likes of Michel Ney and James MacDonnell are not widely known outside of academic circles despite the fact that they – among many others – made telling contributions to a battle that is without a doubt one

of the most important conflicts ever to be fought on European soil.

But while the fog of war seems to have shrouded the names of less prominent men, it seems unfathomable that Generalfeldmarschall Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher should still to this day be so underappreciated. Then, of course, there is August von Gneisenau, the man who, in the words of Wellington himself, “made the most important decision of the 19th century” in rallying the battered Prussian army as it sought to escape another mauling from the French following their defeat at Ligny.

Heroes stood beneath the banners of both the Allies and the French at the Battle of Waterloo, each man willing to rush into the fray to defend their nation’s cause and secure a victory that would forever change the face of Europe.

**“HEROES STOOD BENEATH THE BANNERS OF BOTH THE
ALLIES AND THE FRENCH AT THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO”**



Napoleon Bonaparte

Nationality: French
Position: General and emperor

Feted as one of history's greatest military commanders, the Battle of Waterloo was a direct result of Napoleon's audacious power grab just three months after his daring escape from Elba

The man who would one day become emperor of France and be spoken of in the same glowing terms as Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar was born in the town of Ajaccio on the Mediterranean island of Corsica on the morning of Tuesday 15 August 1769.

Descended from an illustrious line of Italian landowners and parents who supported a Corsican nationalist by the name of Pasquale Paoli, it seems that Napoleon was always destined to be a revolutionary figure, which is exactly what he became during the bloody French Revolution that erupted in 1789.

Schooled in the art of war thanks to his attendance at some of France's most prestigious military academies, Napoleon rapidly rose through the ranks of an army desperately trying to defend the flame of revolution from being extinguished by the royal households of Europe. Scoring a number of impressive victories, including the capture of Fort Mulgrave in 1793 (a triumph that saw him appointed brigadier-general), Napoleon would prove to be the saviour of the Revolution when his tactics and personal courage in charge of 6,000 men quashed a pro-royalist uprising in October 1795, his clever use of cannons working to repel a force of some 30,000 men.

Napoleon's military stock would rise further still in the wake of a successful campaign waged in Italy against Austria in 1796, although this was followed in 1798 by an ultimately failed bid to invade Egypt. But it wouldn't be until November 1799 that Napoleon would seize total control in a coup.

Declaring himself emperor on 14 May 1804, almost a year to the day after the start of the conflict that would come to be known as the Napoleonic Wars, France's ruler would inflict a series of crushing defeats upon the Coalition powers, which included the UK, Austria, Russia and Prussia, plus many other states – including his stunning victory at Austerlitz in 1805.

However, the Allied invasion of France in 1814 would force Napoleon to abdicate, the emperor going into exile on the island of Elba off the west coast of Italy. Yet Napoleon refused to stay put, fooling his captors and escaping the island in February 1815. Having returned to France to raise a new army, he launched a pre-emptive invasion of Belgium that would culminate at Waterloo.

■ Prior to his rise, Napoleon was described by one general as a man with great ability whose name would be heard of

Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington

Nationality: Anglo-Irish
Position: Allied commander

Arguably one of Britain's greatest military minds, and with successful campaigns in India behind him, the duke of Wellington would prove to be Napoleon's match

While Napoleon's lust for military glory was apparent from an early age, young Arthur Wellesley did not initially display any desire to forge a career in soldiering. In fact, had it not been for his mother's intervention, this music-loving man may well have dedicated himself to holding an instrument as opposed to commanding armies.

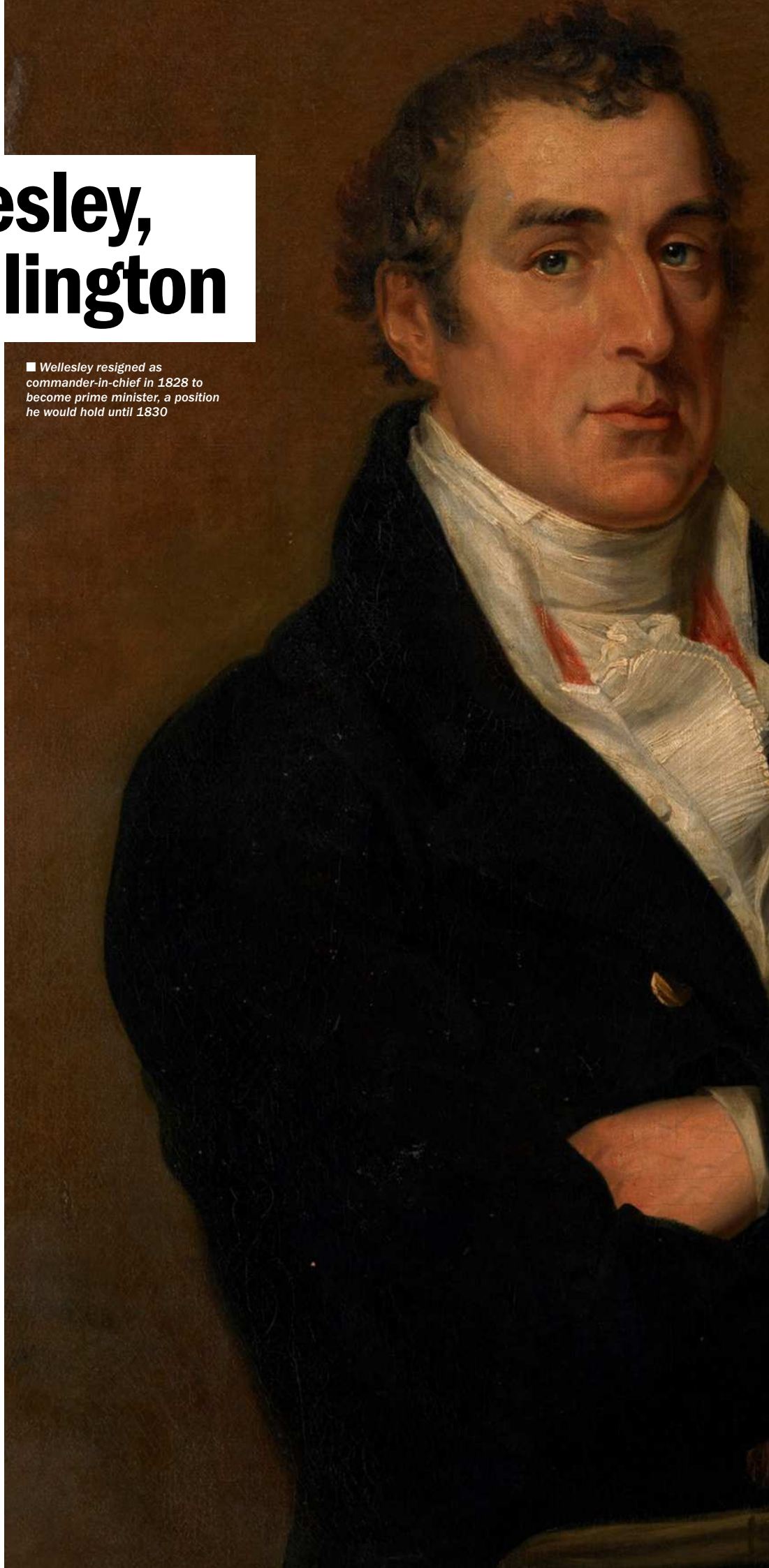
Born in Dublin, Ireland, on 1 May 1769 to the earl and countess of Mornington, Wellesley did not enjoy a particularly easy childhood. Losing his father at a young age and finding his mother rather unloving, he became a withdrawn child, struggling at Eton before attending a military school in Angers in northern France.

Still only in his mid-20s, Wellesley would see action in Flanders while serving as a lieutenant colonel before being posted to India in 1796. Here the once shy Wellesley would develop a reputation for having a good sense of humour and an astute military mind, one that would see him wage successful campaigns against the sultan of Mysore, Tipu Sahib, and score a huge victory at the Battle of Assaye in September 1803. Yet despite his superb military record, Napoleon would write Wellesley off as a mere "Sepoy general".

Having tired of India, Wellesley prepared to return home to England – but not before receiving a knighthood in 1804. The following year he would lead a failed expedition in Germany before taking a period of leave to serve as a Tory MP for Rye. However, it wouldn't be long before he found his boots treading the battlefield once more, this time during the Peninsular War of 1808-14 waged by Britain and Spain against Napoleonic France.

Wellesley would enjoy further success in 1814 by leading an invasion of southern France that would force his nemesis to flee his empire. In return for his accomplishments, Wellesley was made duke of Wellington on 11 May 1814. Even so, by February the following year he would be forced to take charge of the Seventh Coalition and challenged with defeating Napoleon once and for all.

■ Wellesley resigned as commander-in-chief in 1828 to become prime minister, a position he would hold until 1830



“WELLESLEY WOULD ENJOY FURTHER SUCCESS IN 1814 BY LEADING AN INVASION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE THAT WOULD FORCE HIS NEMESIS TO FLEE HIS EMPIRE”

Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher

Nationality: Prussian **Position:** Generalfeldmarschall

Once a cavalryman in the Swedish army, von Blücher would become an admired Prussian general and a key player in the defeat of Napoleon

The son of a retired army captain, Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher was born in Rostock in northern Germany in December 1742. By 1756, at the age of just 16, he enrolled in the Swedish cavalry, in doing so signing up to serve a country at war with Prussia at the time during the Seven Years' War.

Captured in a skirmish by Prussian hussars during the Pomerania Campaign in 1760, von Blücher was brought before the colonel of the regiment that had taken him. Fortunately for the young cavalryman, the colonel happened to be a distant relative who was impressed by von Blücher – so much so that he recruited the young man into his ranks.

Clearly a man willing to go to drastic measures, von Blücher committed a calamitous error in 1772 when he subjected a priest suspected of helping rebels during the Polish uprisings to a mock execution. Appalled by such an act, von Blücher's superiors refused to promote him, prompting an unwisely worded letter of resignation that resulted in Frederick the Great banishing von Blücher from the armed forces. It would prove to be a short-lived expulsion, however, as within a year of Frederick's passing in 1786 von Blücher found himself back in the fold.

Appointed lieutenant-general in 1801, having received the Pour le Mérite medal in 1789, von Blücher would endure a torrid few years in which he was regularly bested by the flower of French military might. His most notable setback came in 1806 at the Battle of Jena in Saxony, a defeat so devastating that it cost Prussia half of its former territories.

Retiring in 1807 following a spell at the War Department, von Blücher was summoned back into active service in 1813 at the outbreak of hostilities with France. He would achieve his revenge at the titanic Battle of Leipzig in the same year before joining Arthur Wellesley in the invasion of France. Even so, arguably his greatest moment was yet to come, and it would arrive on the field at Waterloo.



■ Von Blücher played a pivotal role in the German Campaign of 1813, a series of battles that resulted in the German states casting off the yolk of France

Michel Ney

Nationality: French **Position:** Marshal

Heralded for his valour in the face of enemy fire, Ney would prove to be a fearless general willing to switch sides in order to survive

The rise of Michel Ney was strangely similar to Napoleon's. The son of a blacksmith, Ney was adamant from an early age that soldiering was the life for him. Running away from his legal apprenticeship in 1788 to join a hussar regiment, he rose to prominence during the Revolution as a young soldier fighting with immense courage.

Having gained a reputation for throwing himself into the fray to encourage his men, Ney was appointed as a general in 1796 despite his passionate aversion to the idea of promotion. Having by this stage already suffered numerous injuries in various engagements, Ney was thrown from his horse at the Battle of Neuwied the following year while defending the French cannons against Austrian lancers.

In 1803, Ney turned his hand to 'diplomacy' when he was dispatched with 40,000 men to Switzerland to ensure that the terms of Napoleon's Act of Mediation (an agreement that partly re-established the sovereignty of the nation) were upheld.

The following year, he found himself appointed alongside 13 others as an active marshal of the empire the day after Napoleon's coronation as emperor. Ney soon repaid Napoleon's faith by playing a major role in triumphs at Jena in 1806 and Eylau and Friedland in 1807. However, it wasn't all glory and rewards for the volatile general – his inability to follow orders during a campaign in Spain resulted in him being sent home in disgrace.

Thankfully for Ney, Napoleon's ultimately failed invasion of Russia in 1812 would provide him with the chance to reignite his career. As head of the rear-guard, he miraculously managed to hold off the pursuing Russian army despite being exposed to almost constant artillery fire.

Another courageous retreat was required in 1814 as the Allies closed in on Paris, a situation that would finally break Ney's loyalty to Napoleon. Informing the emperor of his troops' refusal to march, Napoleon desperately insisted that his army would obey him. Ney's retort would force Napoleon to abdicate: "Sire, the army will obey its generals."


With Napoleon in exile, Ney astutely swore allegiance to the restored Bourbons. It was an oath that would only hold until Napoleon's stunning return in 1815, when Ney reluctantly agreed to serve him once more, taking charge of the left wing of the French army at Quatre Bras.



"NEY ASTUTELY SWORE ALLEGIANCE TO THE RESTORED BOURBONS"

■ Described by Napoleon as "the bravest of the brave", Ney was the last man to re-cross the River Niemen during the French retreat from Russia in 1812





■ Hill succeeded Wellington as commander-in-chief of the forces in 1828 and was also appointed governor of Plymouth in 1830

Rowland Hill

Nationality: British
Position: Commander of II Corps

Considered the most trustworthy of his commanders by the duke of Wellington and adored by his men, Hill played a pivotal part in the closing stages at Waterloo

Born in Shropshire on 11 August 1772, Rowland Hill was the son of a wealthy landowner by the name of Sir John Hill, 3rd Baronet, and his wife Mary. Having received an education at The King's School in Chester, he joined the army in 1790 as part of the 38th Foot. Military life proved a natural fit.

Known for his caring and considerate disposition, Hill became known as 'Daddy Hill' and was universally loved by those under his command. In return for his generosity, Hill's men acquitted themselves splendidly on numerous occasions throughout his glittering career.

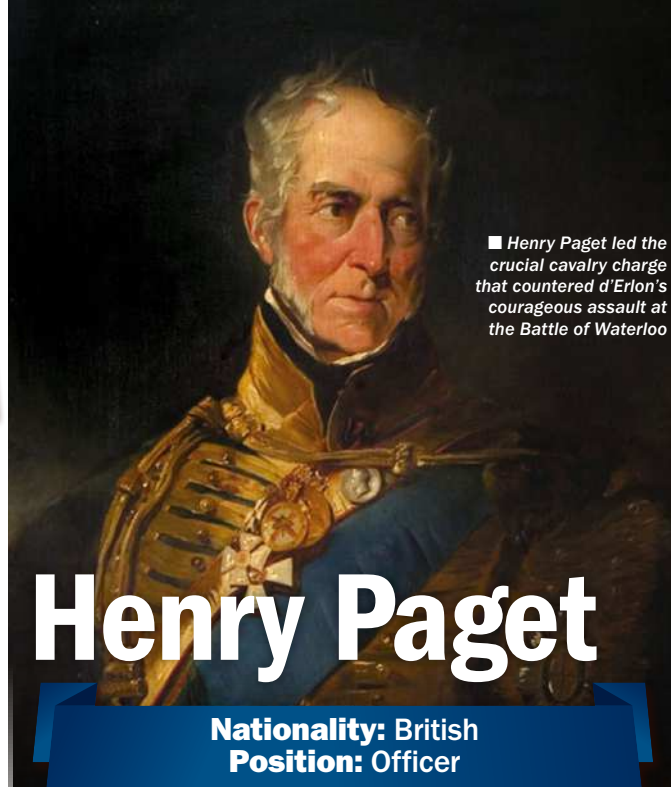
Having helped to drive the French out of Egypt in 1801 (a struggle during which he was almost killed when a stray musket ball struck him in the head), Hill was promoted to major-general in 1805. His promotion was certainly justified, as he then proceeded to secure a string of unlikely triumphs during the Peninsular War. However, it could have been so different.

On the eve of the Battle of Talavera in July 1809 Hill was almost captured by the French during a night-time manoeuvre – an event that is rumoured to have been the cause of his first-ever use of expletives. Fortunately for Wellington, Hill not only evaded imprisonment but went on to first watch and then hold the fallen city of Badajoz in 1812 as the duke was smashing the French at Salamanca.

Arguably Hill's most impressive moment came in December 1813 at the Battle of the Nive. Facing General Jean-de-Dieu Soult's force of 30,000 men and cut off on the east bank of the Nive river, Hill somehow succeeded in repelling their advances with only 14,000 soldiers and ten cannons.

Under two years later, Hill would be placed in command of the II Corps at Waterloo, leading an assault on the elite Imperial Guard as the battle approached its pivotal climax.

“HILL WAS ALMOST CAPTURED BY THE FRENCH DURING A NIGHT-TIME MANOEUVRE – AN EVENT THAT IS RUMOURED TO HAVE BEEN THE CAUSE OF HIS FIRST-EVER USE OF EXPLETIVES”



■ Henry Paget led the crucial cavalry charge that countered d'Erlon's courageous assault at the Battle of Waterloo

Henry Paget

Nationality: British
Position: Officer

Serving both in parliament and the army, this resolute officer would prove to be the embodiment of the famous British stiff upper lip in the carnage of Waterloo

Like many of his contemporaries, Henry Paget saw action on the frontlines of both politics and war. His first baptism of fire came after the 1790 general election, in which he was elected as the Member of Parliament for Carnarvon in north Wales – a seat he would hold until he was replaced by his brother Edward in 1796.

By this stage in Paget's career, the future 1st marquess of Anglesey had already seen action in the doomed Flanders Campaign, fighting as commander of the 80th Regiment of Foot (a volunteer regiment) in 1794.

Paget's soldiering would become a fully fledged profession in 1795 upon his commissioning into the British Army, after which he would serve as commander of the cavalry for Sir John Moore's forces in Spain. It would be in this dusty land of guerrillas that Paget would excel himself.

A man willing to take great risk for even greater reward, Paget consistently dared to attack numerically superior enemy detachments throughout his time in Spain. A notable victory came at the Battle of Sahagún on 21 December 1808.

Despite being outnumbered by two French regiments, Paget boldly directed the 15th Hussars (numbering around 400) to charge approximately 600 French dragoons. Shocked by such an unexpected manoeuvre, the French were utterly routed, losing numerous casualties and 167 prisoners.

Another victory would follow at the Battle of Benavente later in the same year before Paget was charged with marshalling the British retreat to Corunna. Yet, sadly for Paget, his days of glory were to prove short lived as a period of unemployment beckoned.

Having become earl of Uxbridge upon his father's death in March 1812, Paget was honoured with a knighthood in 1815. Shortly afterwards his spell of relative inactivity ended with his appointment as cavalry commander in Belgium. A few months later Paget would lose his right leg to a cannonball at Waterloo, inspiring a now famous exchange with the duke of Wellington. "By God, sir, I've lost my leg," exclaimed Paget. "By God, sir, so you have!" came the duke's rather understated reply.

Jean-Baptiste Drouet, Comte d'Erlon

Nationality: French **Position:** General

If it hadn't been for a military mix up, Drouet could have secured Napoleon a crushing victory before a shot was fired at Waterloo

Born in Reims in 1765, Jean-Baptiste Drouet joined the army in 1782, serving for five years until his discharge in 1787. His absence from the military proved temporary as Drouet once again signed up to serve in 1792. His career took an upward turn just two years later when he was appointed as aide-de-camp for General Lefebvre, whom he served until 1796.

A capable soldier, Drouet displayed his many talents time and again throughout both the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, namely at Austerlitz, in which his division made a huge contribution to the victory.

In 1807, Drouet secured the surrender of the Prussian troops encircled within the city of Danzig. He then helped Napoleon to further victory at Friedland, a battle in which Drouet received a foot wound. In recognition for his efforts, he received a pension and the title of comte d'Erlon. However, this didn't prevent him from switching sides when the time came.

Following Napoleon's abdication in 1814, Drouet swiftly moved to pledge his allegiance to the restored House of Bourbon, although this was borne more out of a desire to live than any real devotion to the monarchy. Arrested for conspiring against the Bourbons, Drouet fled to

join Napoleon upon his escape from Elba.

Tasked with commanding the I Corps, Drouet would endure a frustrating campaign in Belgium. As Napoleon and Marshall de Grouchy attacked von Blücher's forces at Ligny, the former issued an order for Drouet to assault the Prussian right flank. However, just as he prepared to strike, the unfortunate Drouet received a counter order from a desperate Marshall Ney summoning him to Quatre Bras.

Drouet's men were well on their way to the critical crossroads when yet another order, this time from Marshall Soult, directed him back to Ligny. By the time he reached the engagement his men had neither the energy nor the opportunity to make an impact, robbing Napoleon of the chance to destroy the Prussians, an error that would prove devastatingly costly.



■ The son of a carpenter, Drouet trained as a locksmith prior to beginning his life in the military

Emmanuel de Grouchy

Nationality: French **Position:** General and marshal

Misdirected both before and during the Battle of Waterloo, this distinguished veteran squandered the chance to extinguish Wellington's only hope

Born into Parisian aristocracy and raised around royalty, Emmanuel de Grouchy was nevertheless a firm supporter of the Revolution when it erupted. This passion for a more democratic style of governance drove de Grouchy to defend the Revolution against a royalist uprising in Vendée in 1793, after which he was promoted to the post of Général de division.

In August 1799, de Grouchy found himself on the losing side for a change as a Republican French army was routed by an Austro-Russian force of around 50,000 men at the Battle of Novi in northwest Italy. Yet, despite the setback, he deployed his men superbly in an ordered retreat that prevented the complete annihilation of General Joubert's army. Willing to put himself in the firing line, de Grouchy suffered 14 wounds and was eventually captured.

Upon his return to France, de Grouchy was employed by the French Consulate despite having disagreed with the coup that toppled the royal family. By 1801, he found himself in Napoleon's employ and it was under the future emperor that he would serve with distinction in a range of theatres, including Austria, Poland, Prussia and Spain. Yet, just like his fellow leaders in the Waterloo campaign, de Grouchy would suffer as a result of an uncharacteristically poor display by Napoleon.

In the wake of the fighting at Ligny, the mauled Prussian army was ripe for the taking. But instead of setting off in pursuit immediately, Napoleon bizarrely waited until late morning before he dispatched de Grouchy with 33,000 troops and 96 guns to finish off von Blücher's men, telling him to "give them a touch of cold steel in their kidneys".

Catastrophically for the entire campaign, de Grouchy first mistook the Prussian rear-guard for the entire remnants of the shattered army, and then he failed to catch up with it, allowing it to escape and reconvene at Wavre.

"HE DISPATCHED DE GROUCHY WITH 33,000 TROOPS AND 96 GUNS TO FINISH OFF VON BLÜCHER'S MEN, TELLING HIM TO GIVE THEM A TOUCH OF COLD STEEL IN THEIR KIDNEYS"



■ During his lifetime, de Grouchy married twice, fathered five children and penned the same amount of books

August Neidhardt von Gneisenau

Image: Alamy

Nationality: Prussian
Position: Generalfeldmarschall

With his countryman defeated and scrambling to escape a rout, von Gneisenau made a pivotal decision that would decide the outcome at Waterloo

Born into poverty in Saxony in 1760, August von Gneisenau's first taste of military life came two years into his studies at the University of Erfurt when he decided to join an Austrian regiment stationed there in 1799. This choice indirectly resulted in von Gneisenau first becoming a captain for the prince of Ansbach and then serving the British in Canada during the American Revolutionary War as part of an agreement that saw one of the prince's regiments working for the British.

From 1782 to 1783, von Gneisenau saw action in a war that would provide useful experience for his future combative endeavours prior to his return home in 1786, when he applied for and received admission into the Prussian infantry. Among von Gneisenau's many successes during an impressive spell marching below the Prussian flag was the defence of the fortress of Kolberg against a French onslaught in 1806 – an accomplishment that rightly saw him awarded the prestigious Pour le Mérite and a promotion to lieutenant-colonel.

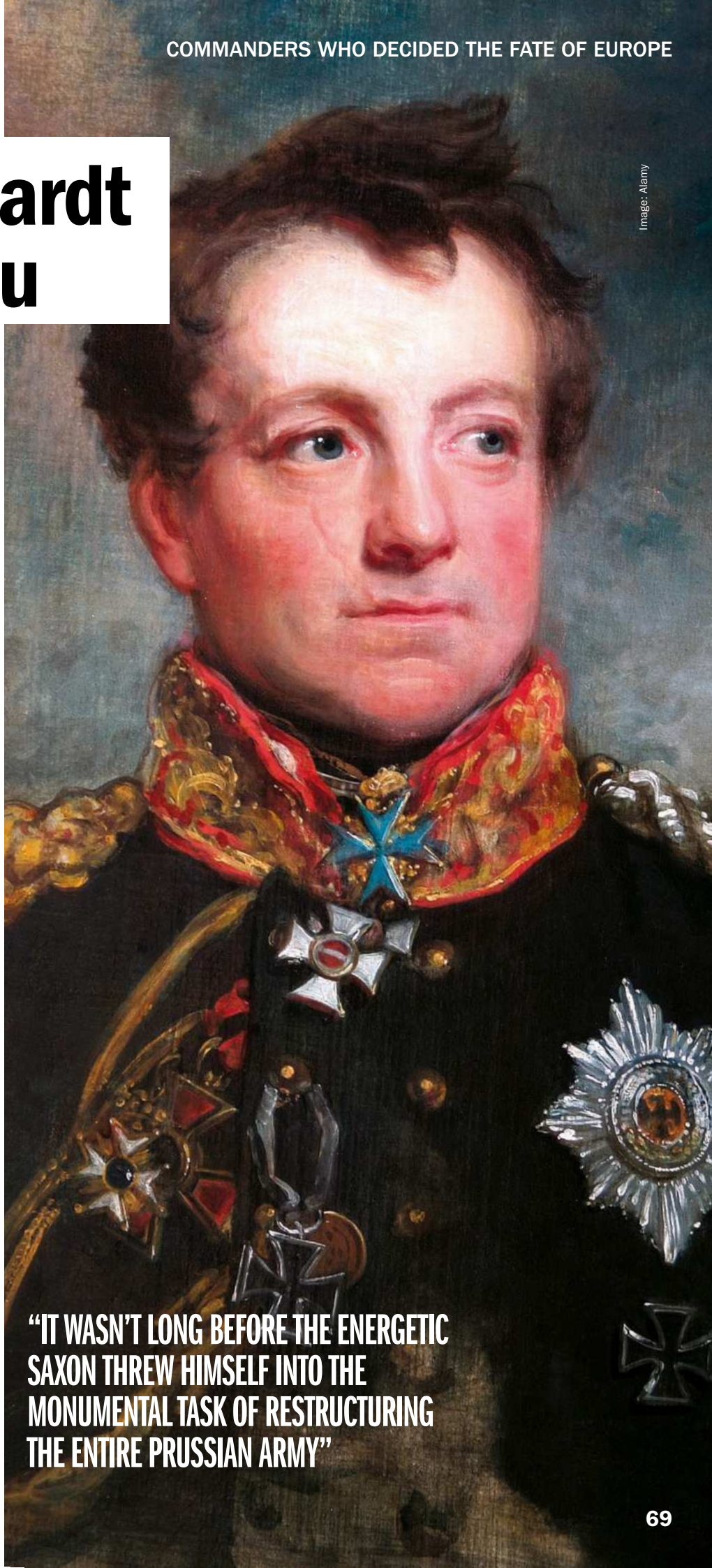
It wasn't long before the energetic Saxon threw himself into the monumental task of restructuring the entire Prussian army, a project that involved him working closely with the war department director Gerhard von Scharnhorst. Together these two visionaries established the Krümpersystem ('shrinkage system') that entailed the rapid training of troops, the removal of birth privileges and the introduction of a method of promotion based on merit.

When Scharnhorst succumbed to a wound sustained at the Battle of Lützen in May 1813, von Gneisenau was promoted once again, this time by General von Blücher to the post of chief-of-staff. It was while in this position that von Gneisenau would see further action, this time in Poland from 1793 to 1794, before dedicating a great deal of time to studying military and political history. This combination of action and academia proved incredibly important prior to Waterloo.

In the wake of a devastating defeat at Ligny, von Gneisenau assumed control of the mangled Prussian army and calmly directed it to a rallying point at Wavre. This in turn enabled its soldiers to regroup and prepare themselves to march again on the 18th, when their contribution would decide the outcome of the battle.

■ In the wake of the Anglo-Prussian victory at Waterloo, von Gneisenau pushed to reach Paris before Wellington

"IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE THE ENERGETIC SAXON THREW HIMSELF INTO THE MONUMENTAL TASK OF RESTRUCTURING THE ENTIRE PRUSSIAN ARMY"



■ At the time of his death, Picton was a sitting MP for Pembroke-Boroughs, a seat he gained in 1813

Thomas Picton

Nationality: British
Position: Lieutenant-general

Renowned for his brilliance and brutality, Picton died as he had lived: striking fear into the hearts of his opponents

Described by the duke of Wellington as a “rough, foul-mouthed devil”, Thomas Picton was not a man to trifle with. Born in Pembrokeshire in 1758, Picton joined the 12th Regiment of Foot in 1773, which was stationed in Gibraltar. When the regiment was subsequently disbanded in 1778, it fell to Picton to stamp out a mutiny, an act for which he was told he would become a major. When this didn’t materialise, he embarked on a period of retirement before heading across the Atlantic to the West Indies.

Following Britain’s invasion of the island of Trinidad in 1797, Picton was appointed to govern the newly captured territory, and it was while serving in this role that his propensity for cruelty came to the fore.

On the evening of 7 December 1801, he was informed by a Spanish trader who lived opposite him that a teenage girl had stolen the princely sum of 2,000 Spanish dollars from a box in his kitchen. The suspect was 14-year-old Louisa Calderón and, despite her age, Picton felt it appropriate to grant the use of torture in order to secure a confession. This entailed tying Calderón by her wrists and forcing her to stand on one leg on a wooden peg – an immensely painful method of interrogation. In 1806, Picton was convicted in Britain for his use of torture (among other charges). However, in an 1808 retrial his defence managed to successfully argue that the measures taken had at the time been permitted by Spanish law as Trinidad had previously been under Spanish rule. Picton was promptly acquitted.

Despite his checkered past, Picton was allowed to serve in the British army during the Peninsular War, during which he performed well, before being appointed as commander of the 5th Infantry Division upon news of Napoleon’s flight from Elba in 1815.

Having been badly wounded at Quatre Bras two days prior, Picton once again displayed his infamous courage in leading a cavalry charge that halted the comte d’Erlon’s attack on Wellington’s centre during the fighting at Waterloo. In doing so, Picton was struck in the temple by a musket ball and killed, unfortunately making him the highest-ranked Allied officer to die on that fateful day.

“HAVING BEEN BADLY WOUNDED AT QUATRE BRAS TWO DAYS PRIOR, PICTON ONCE AGAIN DISPLAYED HIS INFAMOUS COURAGE IN LEADING A CAVALRY CHARGE THAT HALTED THE COMTE D’ERLON’S ATTACK”

Jérôme Bonaparte

Nationality: French **Position:** Commander of 6th Division

A regular source of embarrassment to his older brother, Jérôme Bonaparte finally stepped out of Napoleon's shadow in the bloody struggle for Hougoumont

At 15 years Napoleon's junior and blessed with substantially less natural talent, Jérôme Bonaparte was always going to face an uphill battle to make a name for himself. Despite pleasing his brother by joining the French Navy in 1802, for much of his life he seemed intent on following any course that would enrage Napoleon.

His first mistake was to marry Elizabeth Patterson, a pretty socialite from the city of Baltimore in the United States. This was a matrimony that didn't square with Napoleon's high-handed if understandable ambition to marry his siblings off into the royal families of Europe and thereby secure strategic allegiances. In fact, such was his displeasure at Jérôme's choice of wife that Napoleon stipulated that in the

event of his death his brother Joseph was to assume the throne, followed by Louis, thereby cutting Jérôme out of the line of succession.

Even so, this didn't prevent Napoleon from instilling Jérôme as king of Westphalia, a newly established kingdom in northwest Germany, in 1807, despite having previously written to Joseph to lament about Jérôme: "It's inconceivable what this young man costs me."

By this point, Jérôme had experienced the chaos of war thanks to his command of the 9th Corps during the Rhine campaign of 1806-07. In 1812 he was once again trusted to lead men into battle, this time as commander of three corps – the 5th Polish, 7th Saxon and 8th Westphalian – in the doomed march on Moscow. His appointment would prove calamitous, Jérôme somehow failing to encircle and destroy Prince Piotr Bagration's army of 62,000 when it looked easier to close the trap than inexplicably allow them to escape.

Lambasted by Napoleon for his ineptitude, Jérôme was replaced by Davout, a humiliation that caused him to storm back to Germany. It would take almost three years for Jérôme to redeem himself, and his chance came when he led the initial assault on the British troops tasked with holding the farm of Hougoumont in the maelstrom of Waterloo.

Having fought bravely in a vortex of bloodshed that would claim numerous French lives throughout the day, Jérôme finally received some praise from Napoleon: "Brother, I regret to have known you so late."

"JÉRÔME WAS REPLACED BY DAVOUT, A HUMILIATION THAT CAUSED HIM TO STORM BACK TO GERMANY"

James Macdonell

Nationality: British **Position:** General



■ Macdonell received three awards for his conduct at Waterloo and was made a knight in 1855, two years before his death

In the face of a relentless French assault attempting to expose the Allied flanks, Macdonell inspired his men to hold their ground and repulse the enemy

The man who would one day literally hold Napoleon's army at bay was born into a well-connected Highland clan in 1781. As was common at the time for such ancient Scottish families, Macdonell's sent him to be educated at Douai in France.

In 1794, at the age of just 12, Macdonell became an ensign in an independent company. Acquitting himself well, Macdonell was promoted to lieutenant in the 78th Foot, and by December of the following year he was a captain in the 17th Light Dragoons, with whom he served for nine years.

Upon the formation of the Second Division of the 78th Foot in 1804, Macdonell became its major. His new post took him to Naples and Sicily, a campaign in which he fought with distinction at the Battle of Maida in July 1806, a clash instigated by the British with the aim of preventing Napoleon's forces from invading Sicily. Macdonell also saw action in Egypt during the campaign to oust the French emperor from the land of the pharaohs.

A higher calling came in 1809 when Arthur Wellesley appointed Macdonell to serve on his staff in Portugal as the Peninsular War continued to rage on the continent. After two years at Wellesley's side, Macdonell transferred into the Coldstream Foot Guards as a captain and resumed his role as a frontline soldier, seeing further action in both the Peninsular and the Netherlands.

The moment for which Macdonell has gone down in the annals came at the Battle of Waterloo. On the evening before the battle, Macdonell was ordered to garrison the nearby stone farmhouse of Hougoumont with a detachment of around 1,500 men. Macdonell quickly set to work preparing the building and surrounding courtyard for the onslaught he knew would begin in the morning.

At just before 11.30am the following day, Napoleon directed his artillery to pound the walls encircling Hougoumont before unleashing the men under his brother Jérôme's command to assault it. Despite being vastly outnumbered and facing relentless attacks all day, Macdonell commanded his men superbly and somehow managed to hold out, at one point having to force the gates to the courtyard shut along with his sergeant James Graham as the enemy poured in.



■ Despite entrusting Jérôme with the throne of Westphalia, Napoleon couldn't resist writing his brother a constitution with which to rule by

William Ponsonby

Nationality: Anglo-Irish
Position: Major-general

A veteran of Salamanca, William Ponsonby selflessly served his country in numerous battles before falling in the chaos of Waterloo

When it came to being well connected, William Ponsonby (The Honourable William Ponsonby from 1806 onwards) took some beating. The second son of William Ponsonby, 1st Baron Ponsonby of Imokilly, a unit of land in the county of Cork in Ireland, Ponsonby junior was educated at Kilkenny College before attending Cambridge.

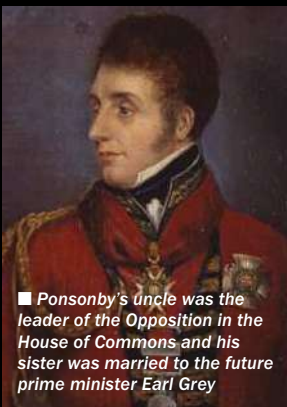
Having married Georgina Fitzroy (the youngest daughter of Charles Fitzroy, 1st Baron of Southampton), Ponsonby entered politics in 1796 as the MP for Bandonbridge in the Irish House of Commons.

As was befitting of many MPs at the time, Ponsonby soon found himself summoned into the field of warfare, arriving on the Iberian Peninsula in October 1811 as commander of the 5th Dragoon Guards. Ponsonby would prove just as capable in the chaos of battle as he was in the din of parliament, taking part in a famous cavalry charge at the Battle of Salamanca in July 1812 that witnessed the rout of an entire French infantry division.

Such courage in the saddle would be required again at Waterloo. At approximately 3pm, with the French heavy guns still pounding away at a weakening British centre, Ponsonby led a daring charge to snuff them out, having already brilliantly counter-attacked d'Erlon's I Corps. However, buoyed by its initial success, the Union Brigade began to splinter off into fragments to pursue its quarry.

Composing themselves, the French retaliated, the 4th Lancers mauling the disjointed British cavalry and chasing after Ponsonby, who soon found himself mired in a muddy quagmire. Unable to go any further, he had no choice but to dismount and make a stand.

Recognising his rank, the French gestured to Ponsonby to surrender, but unfortunately for Ponsonby he misunderstood the request. With some of his comrades now galloping to Ponsonby's aid, a *maréchal des logis* by the name of Francois Orban struck him down with his lance and claimed his sword as a trophy.



■ Ponsonby's uncle was the leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons and his sister was married to the future prime minister Earl Grey

Friedrich Wilhelm Freiherr von Bülow

Nationality: Prussian **Position:** General

Whether it was holding an instrument or a rifle, General von Bülow was an exceptionally talented leader and a constant thorn in Napoleon's side

The son of a highly regarded soldier and military scholar, Friedrich von Bülow received an education appropriate for Prussian nobility before enjoying a glittering military career.

Joining the army at just 13 in 1768, von Bülow became an ensign four years later and rose to the position of second lieutenant by 1775. In 1778, he played a role in a minor conflict that became known as the Potato War. In a bid to thwart the Austrian Empire in its plot to seize Bavaria, a Saxon-Prussian alliance engaged the Habsburg's forces in a series of skirmishes that claimed few lives. However, the starvation that followed would kill thousands.

Von Bülow then enjoyed a relatively calm period in which he dedicated himself to studying military history, a passion that saw him appointed as the military instructor for Prince Louis Ferdinand in 1792. However, von Bülow soon found himself back on the frontlines, fighting at the Siege of Mainz in 1793, for which he received the *Pour le Mérite* and rank of major.

Sent on garrison duty in Poland, von Bülow married in 1802 and later fathered children, although he tragically lost his wife and two of his children soon after. Inexplicably overlooked in 1806 as Prussia dispatched any army to once again confront Napoleon, von Bülow would return to the fray in style in 1813 in his defence of Berlin against Nicolas Oudinot's forces at the Battle of Grossbeeren.

“BY THE TIME OF WATERLOO, NAPOLEON MUST HAVE THOUGHT THAT VON BÜLOW HAD A PERSONAL VENDETTA AGAINST HIM”

Another victory followed swiftly in September at Dennewitz, von Bülow's army inflicting 21,000 losses on a French force of 58,000 and yet again frustrating Napoleon in his efforts to take Berlin. Von Bülow then fought in the mammoth struggle at Leipzig in October that featured 600,000 soldiers and 2,200 pieces of artillery and resulted in a crushing defeat for Napoleon.

Tasked with ejecting the French from the lowlands, von Bülow once again performed admirably, pursuing his enemy all the way back to France and then combining with von Blücher at the Battle of Laon, yet another victory and one that allowed the Allies to march on Paris in March 1814.

By the time of Waterloo, Napoleon must have thought that von Bülow had a personal vendetta against him, for the Prussian once more proved an immovable adversary, commanding the crucial assault on the emperor's left flank as the French lost momentum.

■ Von Bülow's promise to Wellington that at least three Prussian corps would support the British at Waterloo was the sole reason the duke chose to stand and fight

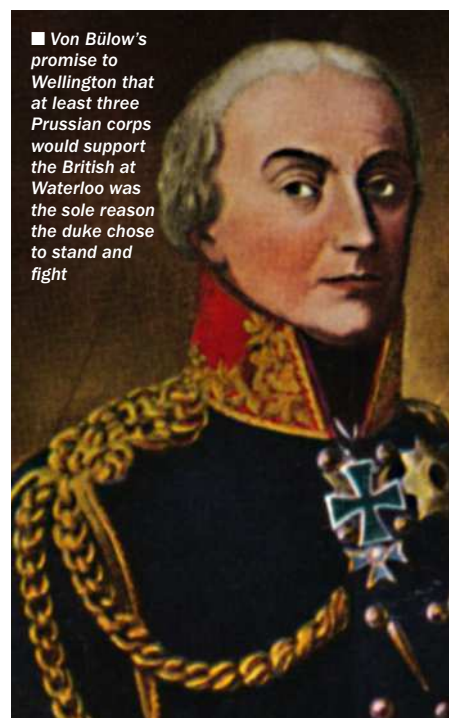


Image: Getty

William II of the Netherlands

Nationality: Dutch

Position: General of I Allied Corps

Adored by his own people and the British that gave him asylum, William II was heralded as the architect of victory at Waterloo upon his return home

While William II enjoyed the trappings of royalty as an adult monarch, his early years were far from easy. Born in Noordeinde Palace in 1792, by 1795 William, along with the rest of his family, found himself forced into exile by a French invasion of the Netherlands.

However, it wasn't long before the future king returned to the continent, spending much of his youth in Berlin. He also served in the Prussian army during his time in Germany. England would call again as he approached adulthood, with William studying civil law at Oxford University.

Still only 19, William was employed as the duke of Wellington's aide-de-camp in 1811 and afforded the privileged opportunity to watch the brilliant commander in action during the Peninsular War. By June of the same year, as custom dictated, he was made a lieutenant-colonel, then a colonel by October. Thankfully, his meteoric rise wasn't resented by his British comrades, who appreciated his bravery and good humour and affectionately nicknamed him 'Slender Billy'.

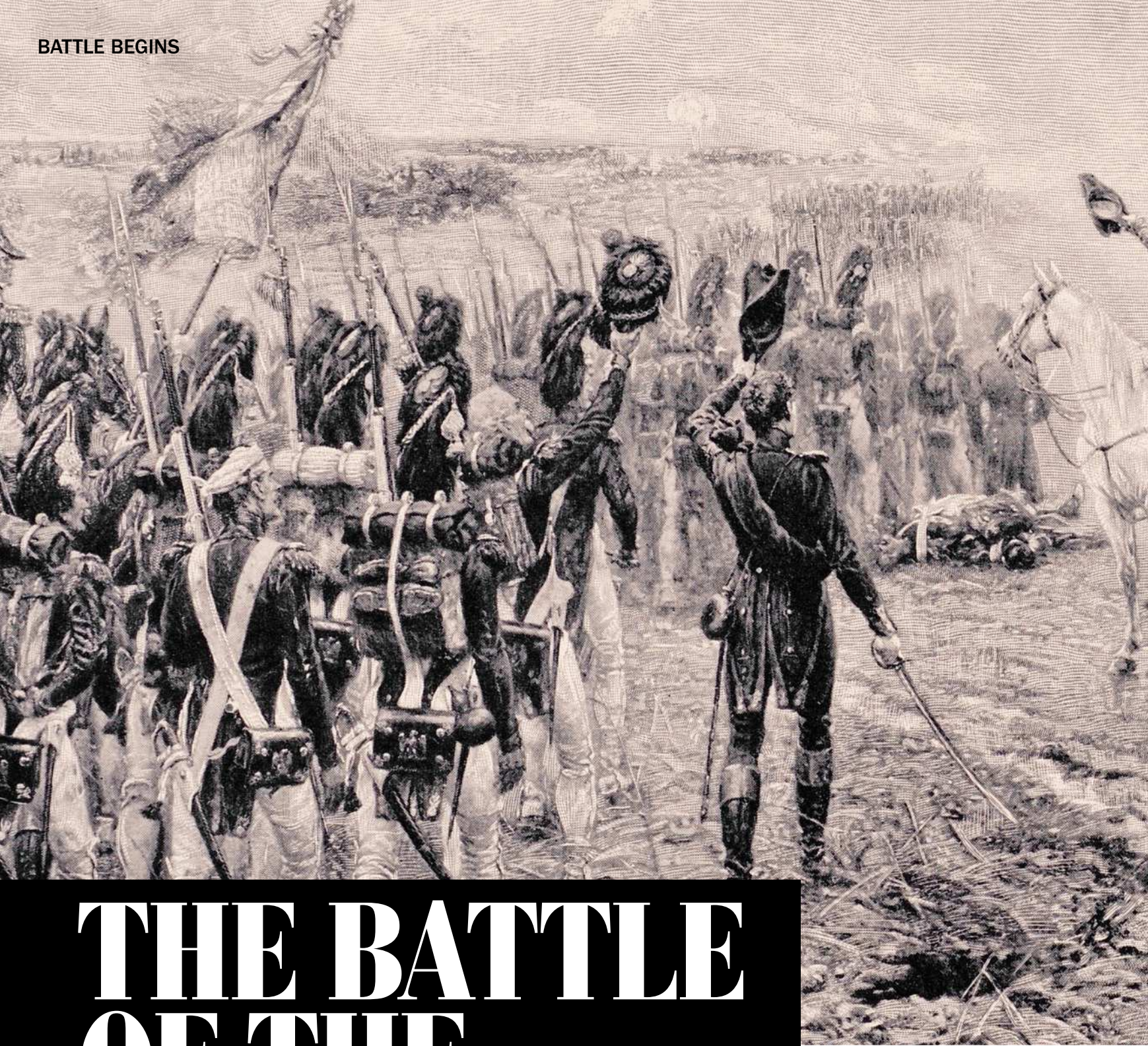
By the time of Napoleon's return to France in 1815, William was the most senior officer in the Allied army of the Low Countries – a role that he relinquished upon Arthur Wellesley's arrival. Yet despite his lofty position, the Battle of Quatre Bras was William's first full taste of frontline action.

Fighting as general of the Allied I Corps, William came through the engagement at the crossroads unscathed, but he was wounded at Waterloo two days later. Upon his return home, William was offered the illustrious Soestdijk Palace in the province of Utrecht by a grateful populace in a hugely inflated recognition of his services in the Waterloo campaign.

“HIS METEORIC RISE WASN'T RESENTED BY HIS BRITISH COMRADES, WHO APPRECIATED HIS BRAVERY AND GOOD HUMOUR AND AFFECTIONATELY NICKNAMED HIM 'SLENDER BILLY'”

■ On the night of the duchess of Richmond's famous ball, William II kept Wellington abreast of Napoleon's lightening advance via a series of dispatches

BATTLE BEGINS



THE BATTLE OF THE THREE ARMIES

EUROPE'S NATIONS RAISED A MILLION-MAN ARMY TO STOP NAPOLEON, BUT THEIR TROOPS WERE POORLY TRAINED AND MOST WOULDN'T BE READY IN TIME





The Seventh Coalition was an alliance between Britain, Austria, Russia and Prussia. Each promised to raise 150,000 troops to counter Napoleon's return to power. Another 12 European states subsequently joined the coalition, which would very soon have a million men at its disposal. But Napoleon's plan was to strike fast enough to outmanoeuvre the coalition and by 18th June 1815, only the British and Prussian armies were close enough to contest him.

The Battle of Waterloo is popularly thought of as a decisive battle in which Wellington led the British to victory against Emperor Napoleon. In fact, all of these statements are false. Only a third of Wellington's army comprised British and Irish troops. The rest were drawn from across continental Europe, and German-speaking

"HAD NAPOLEON BEEN ABLE TO TACKLE THE TWO ARMIES SEPARATELY, HE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE PREVAILED"

soldiers actually outnumbered the British. Napoleon wasn't the Emperor of France, either. He was a renegade outlaw leading an army that had deserted from the internationally recognised legitimate government of France. In fact, France was a member of the Seventh Coalition, so in a sense, France actually won at Waterloo!

Most importantly, victory at Waterloo wasn't entirely Wellington's. He certainly fought a brilliant defensive action but he could not have defeated Napoleon without the aid of a third army who arrived in the late afternoon. This was

the Prussian Army, commanded by General von Blücher. Had Napoleon been able to tackle the two armies separately, as he intended, he would probably have prevailed. Whether he would have been able to go on to reconquer Europe is much more doubtful – there were still a quarter of a million men in the Austro-German Army under Field Marshall Schwartzberg to contend with, and another 200,000 Russians marching west. But the outcome at Waterloo would hinge on the strength and determination of just three armies: the British and Prussians, versus the French.

BATTLE BEGINS

■ The Duke of Wellington wearing relatively muted uniform, orders the British line to advance



THE BRITISH

THIS MOTLEY ARMY SAW TROOPS OF DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES, EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING, FIGHTING SIDE-BY-SIDE. UNDERMANNED AND UNDER-EQUIPPED, THEY PREPARED TO HOLD OFF THE FRENCH

Wellington arrived in Brussels in April 1815 to take command of the allied army of Flanders. At the time, this was a small force of British soldiers and Germans from the Duchy of Hanover that had been stationed to defend the borders of the Netherlands since the end of the Peninsular War in 1814. Most of Britain's best troops were still in America, since the War of 1812 had only just ended, and those that had fought against Napoleon in the previous war had nearly all been demobbed. Over the next three months, Wellington's army was reinforced by troops from the German Duchies of Nassau and Brunswick, as well as 17,000 Dutch infantry. Even within the British Army, 6,000 of the soldiers belonged to the King's German Legion. This was a unit of expatriate Germans who were

under British command because King George III was also Hanoverian. These were the most experienced of the allied troops and the only ones to have seen action against Napoleon in the previous war. Less than 13 per cent of the forces under Wellington's command had ever seen battle before. Wellington himself described them as "inexperienced, weak and ill-equipped". Their nationalities and levels of training and experience were so diverse that co-ordination and co-operation were a serious challenge. Wellington was particularly suspicious of the Dutch and Belgian soldiers, since many of them had previously served with the French army and might harbour secret sympathies for Napoleon.

Wellington attempted to counter this division in two important ways. In society company in

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THE BATTLE OF THE THREE ARMIES

The Duke of Wellington visits outposts at Soignes

the weeks leading up to the campaign, he made the international character of the allied army into a point of pride. He banned *Rule Britannia* from being sung at concerts and made a point of wearing the ceremonial feathers of all the different nations in his hat. On the battlefield, he adopted a much more sober outfit, with dark colours and no obvious signs of rank. This allowed him to stay close to his troops during battle without fear of being targeted by snipers. He organised his army into two infantry corps, plus a reserve and the cavalry, commanded by Lord Uxbridge. At both corps and divisional level, he made sure that the troops were a mix of different nationalities and of veteran and inexperienced soldiers.

Wellington had only 156 artillery guns to Napoleon's 252. He had less cavalry than Napoleon too, but it was infantry that he was most sorely in need of, since artillery and cavalry could not be used effectively without infantry

support. To defeat Napoleon, he would need to join with the Prussian army marching from the East. Napoleon knew this too, however, and on 16 June, merely two days before the Battle of Waterloo, he sent Marshal Ney to cut off the two armies at a crossroads called Quatre Bras, which was only lightly defended by Dutch forces. The Duke of Brunswick was killed in that battle, but Ney pressed his advantage too cautiously and as the day wore on, more reinforcements streamed in from the Scots Highlanders to force a tactical draw. Wellington pulled back on the following day under the cover of cavalry and artillery, so that he could arrange all his forces just behind the Mont-Saint-Jean ridge, near the village of Waterloo.

On the night of 17 June, Wellington was left with 68,000 troops. He had forbidden them from looting the surrounding villages and farms and most of the soldiers had no food or quarters. As a torrential rainstorm poured down, they were

forced to improvise rough shelters from bales of hay and branches cut from the trees. Diaries kept by the infantrymen make it clear that they spent a long and miserable night.

But Wellington was a master of defensive tactics. He had never lost a battle and was the only major commander that Napoleon had never defeated. He knew that he could win, simply by holding his ground long enough for the Prussians to arrive. The ridge line would protect his troops from direct cannon fire until he was ready to commit them, and to defend against cavalry, he formed his limited infantry into defensive squares. Each side consisted of two ranks of infantry, kneeling with fixed bayonets. Horses would refuse to charge on this wall of spikes and would instead stream around it. This left them vulnerable to musket fire from the infantry in the next two or three ranks. Should they need to withdraw, the beech forest behind the ridge would give them cover.

THE FRENCH

A FANATICAL BUT VOLATILE ARMY OF VETERAN SOLDIERS UNITED TO RESTORE THE REVOLUTIONARY IDEALS CHAMPIONED BY NAPOLEON TEN YEARS AGO

■ Napoleon's old officers readily defected to his cause when he escaped from Elba



Napoleon's army was not the famous Grande Armée that had won a glorious victory against the Russian and Austrian empires at Austerlitz in 1805 – that legendary fighting force had effectively been annihilated during the disastrous invasion of Russia. Napoleon began with 685,000 men in June 1812 and limped home six months later with fewer than 100,000. Virtually all the surviving non-French soldiers (including Dutch, Austrian, Polish and German troops) simply returned to their own countries. Then, after Napoleon abdicated and was exiled to Elba in 1814, the monarchy was restored under King Louis XVIII. To help pay for the costs of the recent wars, Louis disbanded half the French army and put 12,000 officers on half pay. Most of the demobbed troops were career soldiers who had no other trade to return to. The demoralising effect on the army that remained was enormous, and anti-royalist sentiment once again became widespread.

When Napoleon escaped from Elba in February 1815, he landed on the south coast of France, near Cannes, together with his personal

“SUCH WAS NAPOLEON’S APPEAL AND CHARISMA, HOWEVER, THAT EACH TIME HE WAS CONFRONTED BY THE KING’S TROOPS, THEY PROMPTLY DEFECTED TO JOIN HIM”

bodyguard of 700 soldiers and 300 Corsican infantry. The British Colonel Sir Neil Campbell, who was supposed to be keeping an eye on Napoleon, got word to the French that Napoleon had left, and Louis XVIII sent regiments to intercept him. Such was Napoleon's appeal and charisma, however, that each time he was confronted by the king's troops, they promptly defected to join him.

Marshall Ney had fought under Napoleon in Russia, but had been the leader of the generals who mutinied and forced him to abdicate in 1814. To demonstrate his loyalty to the French king, he had vowed to bring him Napoleon “in a cage”. Yet he, too, immediately swapped sides when he came face to face with his

old commander. Once he reached Paris and reclaimed his throne without a shot being fired against him, Napoleon found there were just 46,000 combat ready troops available to him.

Two months later, at the end of May 1815, he had managed to raise this to 198,000, with another 66,000 recruits undergoing training. Despite the speed of this mobilisation, these were not raw recruits; this was actually the best force that Napoleon had commanded since his Russian campaign. They were no longer called the Grande Armée, but the Armée du Nord (the Army of the North). Gone were the regiments of different nationalities from across the wider French Empire. Every soldier was a Frenchman now. The newest recruits would not complete

■ French infantry march to the front at Ligny on 16th June to head off the Prussians attempting to reach Wellington

their training in time to fight at Waterloo, so all the soldiers that faced Wellington were veterans to some degree. 19th-century French historian Henry Houssaye described this army as “volatile, always ready to argue, undisciplined, suspicious of its leaders, undermined by the fear of betrayal and therefore perhaps susceptible to panic, but also battle-tested, war-loving, thirsty for revenge, capable of heroic efforts and furious elan, and more spirited, more passionate, more fanatical than any other French army, whether Republican or Imperial: such was the army of 1815. Napoleon had never held in his hand an instrument of war so fearful, nor one so fragile.”

Napoleon organised his army into six principal corps, with four additional cavalry corps and the French Imperial Guard to act as reserves. The principal corps each had a mixture of infantry, cavalry and artillery and were intended to be capable of

holding a defensive position without support for at least a day. He also mixed hardened veterans with less experienced units. The officers of Napoleon’s army were nearly all career soldiers and three-quarters of them had risen up through the ranks, having joined either as non-commissioned officers or even as enlisted soldiers. This contrasted with the British army, where more than 90 per cent of the officers were upper-class gentlemen who had bought their commission and had no experience among the rank and file of the ordinary soldier. As well as their greater combat experience, the French army were better equipped than the allies. His cuirassiers, or heavy cavalry, wore armoured steel breast- and backplates and the infantry carried muskets that though less accurate than the British Baker rifle, had a higher rate of fire. Napoleon had less artillery than the Prussians but still almost 100 more guns than Wellington. Throughout the Peninsular war, Napoleon had enthusiastically exploited the advances in artillery technology, winning many of his battles by means of highly mobile and accurate artillery teams. The British Royal Artillery still relied on volunteers and was never able to recruit enough gunners to provide adequate artillery support.





THE PRUSSIANS

AN ILL-DISCIPLINED FIGHTING FORCE OF CONSCRIPTS HELD TOGETHER BY AN EXPERIENCED OFFICER CLASS, THE PRUSSIANS HAD BEEN HURT BADLY BY NAPOLEON AND WANTED REVENGE



■ Even though he was badly wounded at Ligny when his horse fell on him, Blücher enthusiastically pushed his men on to Waterloo

Gebhard von Blücher was a career soldier who had begun as a hussar in the Swedish army in 1758, and switched sides to join the Prussian army in 1760. He had a fiery and impetuous temperament and once resigned in a fit of pique when he was passed over for promotion. By 1805 he had risen to cavalry general and during the Napoleonic Wars faced Napoleon's armies at least seven times. He was only victorious in one of these engagements, but he was made a Prince of Wahlstatt in 1814 and was popularly known as 'Marshall Forwards' due to his unrelenting energy and enthusiasm.

When the Seventh Coalition was formed to counter Napoleon once more, Blücher was put in command of the army of the Lower Rhine, comprising 122,500 men and 361 guns. These soldiers were a motley mixture of old and young with limited training and experience. Prussia's territory and resources had been badly depleted in the previous wars and it could barely supply

an army this size with food and ammunition. Although there were soldiers in their mid-forties still serving, the bulk of Blücher's army was between 17 and 25. Prussia had mandatory military service of five years from age 20, but in the scramble to defend Europe against Napoleon, many recruiters turned a blind eye and allowed younger men to join as well. Most of the rank and file were German speaking, with a minority of ethnic Poles mixed in. Many of the various German and Prussian duchies promised troops for the coalition, but took so long to actually deliver that they weren't available to Blücher in time for Waterloo. Those that did turn up were poorly trained and unfamiliar to each other, which hampered efforts to form a cohesive army. Unlike Napoleon, Blücher's army placed great reliance on skirmishers armed with rifles, known as Jäger ('hunter' in German). But riflemen took much longer to train and Blücher didn't have enough of them. One third of his army consisted of the 'Landwehr'. These were men who had completed their military service and now were kept on as a reserve militia. They didn't receive regular training and were only issued with muskets.

What saved this army was the quality of its officers. Nearly all of them had fought against Napoleon in 1806 – some had even fought with him when Napoleon defeated Prussia and forced a reluctant alliance. 20,000 Prussians

had actually taken part in Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 and had suffered much lighter losses than the main body of the Grande Armée. Their experience, organisation and discipline managed to hold together an under-equipped and patchily motivated rag-tag army. Blücher himself was now 72 and relied heavily for the day-to-day running of his army on his chief of staff, Lieutenant General Count Neidhardt von Gneisenau. Nominally, von Gneisenau was the quartermaster general. In reality he took charge

“BLÜCHER'S MAKESHIFT ARMY WAS MOTIVATED BY A FANATICAL HATRED OF THE FRENCH”

of most of the military planning, as well as the logistics. Unlike Napoleon's Armée du Nord, the Army of the Lower Rhine omitted the divisional level altogether and simply organised each corps into four brigades of infantry with two or three cavalry brigades and a single artillery brigade. These brigades had an innovative attack formation that was taught to every officer and used lines of skirmishers in coordination with regular battalions.

Blücher's makeshift army was motivated by a fanatical hatred of the French. Not just because of the past injustices from the wars of 1806 to 1812, but also because of their loss against Napoleon at the Battle of Ligny just two days ago. They entered the battle with high morale, urged on by the irrepressible enthusiasm of Blücher himself. But their fanaticism was accompanied by frequent loss of discipline. When the fighting turned against them, units were liable to abruptly break and flee. When it went in their favour, they could be too enthusiastic and waste ammunition. This was particularly true of the artillery. A unit that had exhausted its powder and shot would be moved back to the reserve line and replaced with a fresh unit. This meant that in battle the Prussian artillery raced through its ammunition as quickly as possible so that they could retreat to safety.

Whatever reservations Wellington had about his own troops, the Prussians were worse. General Karl von Müffling remarked to Wellington: “Our infantry doesn't possess the same physical force and capacity to resist as yours. Most of our troops are too young and inexperienced.” Nevertheless, the arrival of the Prussians at Waterloo in the late afternoon of 18 June would force Napoleon to divert an entire corps to defend his right flank. These were his reserve forces that could not now be used to attack Wellington in the centre.



■ Prussian infantry storm the village of Plancenoit, on Napoleon's right flank, forcing him to commit his reserves

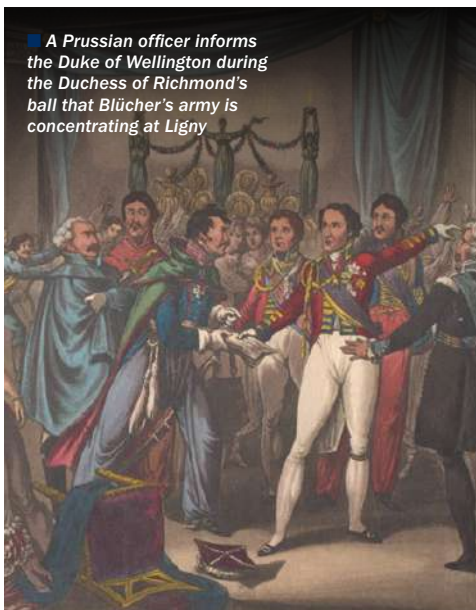
HIGH TIDE AT WATERLOO

NAPOLEON SAW HIS DREAM OF CONQUEST SLIP AWAY IN A SINGLE DAY AS VICTORY ELUDED HIM AT WATERLOO AND THE FORCES OF THE SEVENTH COALITION PURSUED HIM INTO FINAL EXILE

■ British soldiers of the Black Watch fight for their lives against French lancers at the Battle of Quatre Bras



■ A Prussian officer informs the Duke of Wellington during the Duchess of Richmond's ball that Blücher's army is concentrating at Ligny



With France in turmoil under the Bourbon King Louis XVIII, Napoleon Bonaparte – the former emperor who had nearly succeeded in becoming master of all Europe – sensed opportunity. Returning from exile on the island of Elba with only 1,000 loyal troops, he nevertheless rallied the French Army to his side, and began the final chapter of one of history's most storied military careers. His bid for power, again nearly successful, ended on the battlefield in Belgium near a previously obscure village called Waterloo.

The road to defeat on 18 June 1815 had begun for Napoleon with high hopes. He had maintained an offensive posture against his principal opponent, the Duke of Wellington, who commanded a polyglot army of British and German troops along with soldiers from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the Prussian Army under Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher. His Grand Armée du Nord, 130,000 strong, was more than a match for Wellington

and his 72,000 troops or Blücher's 120,000 as long as he could engage and defeat them separately. However, should his enemies' armies unite, their sheer weight of numbers might overwhelm the French forces. For Napoleon, both the opportunity and the peril of the situation were clear.

On 16 June, Napoleon had come close to achieving decisive victories against the separated armies of Wellington and Blücher. At Ligny, the French battered two corps of the Prussian Army, putting it to flight with the loss of 20,000 men killed, wounded or having deserted their flag. Only the superb organisational skills of Blücher's chief of staff, August Count Neidhardt von Gneisenau, saved the Prussians from complete rout as he restored order near Wavre that evening. Meanwhile, the left wing of the French army, under the command of Napoleon's trusted lieutenant, Marshal Michel Ney, launched an attack against Wellington at the crossroads of Quatre Bras. The duke was taken by surprise and absent from the field, but the Dutch Prince

■ Napoleon surveys the field at Waterloo, where his army met defeat along with his dream of a resurgent empire



of Orange sent reinforcements to meet the threat, and the vulnerable position stabilised.

Errors on both sides had nearly resulted in their undoing. Napoleon failed to commit the entire I Corps of his army, 19,000 soldiers under Marshal Jean-Baptiste Drouot, Comte d'Erlon, to either Ligny or Quatre Bras, allowing his opponents to avoid decisive defeat. Wellington and Blücher were poorly prepared for the battles and were indeed fortunate. With assurances from Blücher that he would provide support in a defensive engagement against Napoleon, Wellington withdrew to the ridge of Mont-Saint-Jean and deployed astride the Brussels road, 12 miles from the Belgian capital, to await the French attack that would surely come. To his own detriment, Napoleon remained confident of victory, and dispatched one third of his army, under Marshal Emmanuel de Grouchy, in fruitless pursuit of the Prussians. The great tactician had deprived himself of a significant number of troops during the coming battle, and Grouchy vacillated, failing to march toward the sounds of the cannon at Waterloo, and contributing nothing to the engagement.

On the morning of 18 June, Napoleon arrived with the vanguard of his army and occupied a ridge near Mont-Saint-Jean. When his scouts spotted Wellington's skirmishers, he exclaimed: "I have those English now! I tell you, Wellington is a bad general, the English are bad troops, and this affair is nothing more than eating breakfast!" Napoleon's supreme self-confidence contributed to his eventual defeat.

He discounted the prospect that more than only a fraction of the Prussian army, if any, was marching toward Waterloo.

Napoleon quickly assessed the strength of his enemy's position. Wellington was anchored on the high ground with a heavy skirmish line across the forward slope of Mont-Saint-Jean. From right to left, three key farmsteads, Hougoumont, La Haye Sainte and Papelotte, might serve as breakwaters, stemming the tide of a French advance against his centre. He instructed Lieutenant Colonel James Macdonnell of the Coldstream Guards to hold Hougoumont and "defend the post to the last extremity."

Despite the fact that Waterloo remains one of the most significant battles in history, the hour of its inception is disputed. Wellington recalled that the fighting began around 10am, while others place the time around 11.30am. Still, other historians place the time closer to noon.

Regardless, the die was cast soon enough. The first French blows at Waterloo fell on Hougoumont in the late morning, a diversion for Napoleon's main attack against Wellington's centre along the ridge of Mont-Saint-Jean. Although the assault on Hougoumont was initially no more than a feint, the capture of the farmstead soon became a fixation for Napoleon.

WEATHER AND GOOD GROUND

Although some aspects of Napoleon's planning for the climactic Battle of Waterloo may have been questionable, elements beyond his control shaped the outcome of the engagement. Heavy rains the night before had turned dirt roads and fields into quagmires, potentially slowing the advances of cavalry as horses became mired and infantry as soldiers, already footsore, slogged through clinging mud. Artillery shells might simply slap into the soggy soil, failing to explode or their destructive force greatly diminished.

The inclement weather compelled Napoleon to delay his opening attack at Waterloo as much as four hours, hoping the ground would dry at least somewhat. However, the decision allowed

Wellington more time to prepare, and enabled the Prussian army, marching for the battlefield, to advance ever closer and impact the outcome of the engagement.

Furthermore, it was Wellington who chose the ground on which to fight, and he chose well. Mont-Saint-Jean afforded a strong defensive position, and Wellington placed the majority of his troops along the reverse slope, out of French sight and protected somewhat from the terrific artillery barrage that accompanied the assault against his centre and the farmstead of Hougoumont. When the battle began, scarcely a half mile of wheat fields separated the two great armies.

BLOODY FIREFIGHT AT HOUGOUMONT

PRINCE JÉRÔME BONAPARTE'S FIXATION WITH THE FORTIFIED CHATEAU
SQUANDERED PRECIOUS TIME AND MANPOWER WORDS BY WILLIAM E. WELSH

The muscular French sous-lieutenant Legros chopped furiously with his axe at the wooden bar that held together the double doors of the north gate of Hougomont chateau at half past noon on the day of the battle. After he hacked his way through the bar, he and several dozen French soldiers fought their way into the courtyard. A high-stakes melee ensued in which the French and British foot soldiers fought hand-to-hand with muskets, bayonets and fists for control.

To prevent more French from infiltrating, Lieutenant-Colonel James Macdonnell of the Coldstream Guards yelled for help closing the gates. Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Wyndham and Corporal James Graham sprang to his assistance, as did a handful of other soldiers, and they forced shut the heavy gates just as more French were trying to push their way in. The British in the courtyard then began systematically killing the French trapped inside.

To assist their fellow fighters, British soldiers defending the houses, barns and sheds that lined the perimeter of the courtyard turned their muskets inward and fired through windows at the French. After a brief but bloody firefight, the Coldstream Guards had killed all of the French who had followed Legros inside, save a drummer boy who they spared.

Shortly after nightfall on 17 June 1815, Field Marshal Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, ordered four light companies drawn from the 2nd and 3rd Guards Brigades to occupy the estate known as Hougomont in front of the Anglo-Allied army's line of battle atop Mont-Saint-Jean Ridge. In a heavy downpour that turned dirt paths into rivers of mud, the 400 light infantrymen tramped downhill to the farm that lay in a shallow swale in front of the Anglo-Allied right. Wellington had decided to transform the estate into a strongpoint to thwart any attempt by French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte to not

only turn his right flank, but also protect it from a frontal assault.

On the morning of the battle, the duke sent additional light infantry from other brigades to defend the estate. He ordered 600 Nassauers, 300 Hanoverian jagers and 100 Lunebergers to occupy the Great Orchard on the east side. Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Fraser, Lord Saltoun, who commanded two light companies of the 1st Guards Brigade already in the Great Orchard, assumed his troops were being relieved. Saltoun therefore began leading his troops back to the main line on Mont-Saint-Jean ridge but Wellington ordered him to remain in a meadow near the Great Orchard. On further inspection of Hougomont, the duke ordered the Nassau and Hanoverian troops in the orchard to move to an advanced position in the woods adjacent to the estate on the south side.

The 1,300 defenders of Hougomont, excluding Saltoun's men, were deployed as

"IN A HEAVY DOWNPOUR THAT TURNED DIRT PATHS INTO RIVERS OF MUD, THE 400 LIGHT INFANTRYMEN TRAMPED DOWNHILL TO THE FARM THAT LAY IN A SHALLOW SWALE"



GUARDING HOUGOMONT

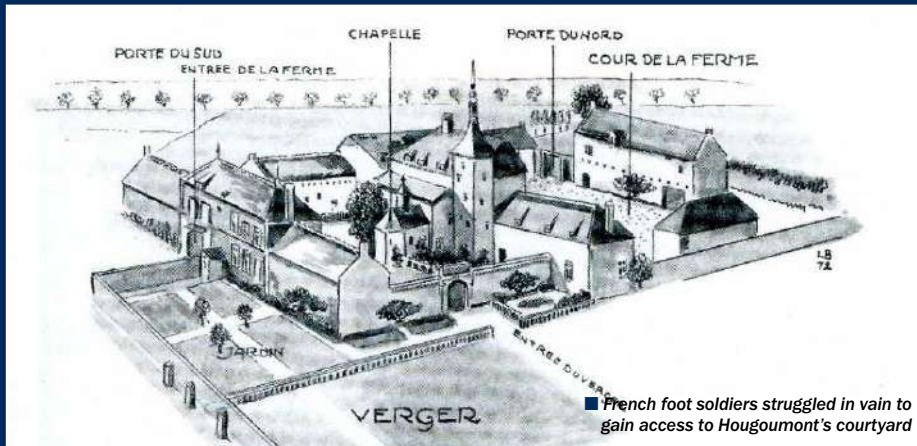
The allies improved the chateau's defences

Hougoumont was a working farm that dated back to the 14th century. It consisted of a complex of buildings that included a chateau, gardener's house, chapel, barns and sheds that lined an enclosed courtyard. East of the buildings was a formal garden with walls bordering it on the east and south sides. A small orchard was situated north of the garden, and a much larger Great Orchard was adjacent to the formal garden to the east. Directly south of the buildings was a tract of neatly maintained woods that was 320 metres deep by 256 metres wide.

1.8-metre-high hedges ringed the entire estate and its woods, orchard and garden. The Anglo-Allied troops had to defend the south gate,

the double-panelled Great Gate on the north side, a door in the west wall, and a garden gate that connected the south courtyard and the formal garden. The north gate initially was left open to receive ammunition resupply from the Anglo-Allied army's main position to the north.

When the light battalion of the Coldstream Guards arrived at the compound late on 17 June, they set to work establishing fighting positions. With assistance of pioneers armed with tools they carved loopholes through the brick and stone walls and constructed firesteps that would enable them to fire over the walls. This work transformed the chateau into a stronghold that might only be taken at a heavy cost.



follows in preparation for the French attack. The 1,000 Nassau, Hanoverian and Luneberger infantry in the open wood; 200 Coldstream light company troops in the buildings, courtyards and formal garden; and 100 men from the 3rd Guards light company outside the farm near the south gate to cover the lane running past the farm on the south side.

South of Hougoumont, French general Honoré Charles Reille's II Corps prepared to advance. Napoleon had entrusted the responsibility for a diversionary attack on Hougoumont to his brother, Prince Jérôme Bonaparte, who commanded the 6th Infantry Division of the II Corps. His gambit was that the attack would compel Wellington to reinforce Hougoumont at the expense of his centre and reserve.

Napoleon told his brother on the morning of the attack that he was not to incur heavy losses trying to storm chateau. Although Jérôme had a stubborn streak like his brother, he had none of his brother's tactical genius – he owed his generalship to blatant nepotism. The attack on Hougoumont would precede the bombardment by 90 minutes and would signal the main attack on the Anglo-Allied centre.

Jérôme's division was composed of two brigades and 96 guns. He selected Brigadier General Baron Pierre-François Bauduin's 2,000-man First Brigade to lead the attack. At 11.30am, a strong line of French skirmishers swept into Hougoumont's timber and began a spirited attack on the Nassauers, Hanoverians



BATTLE BEGINS

■ A cart bearing small arms ammunition arrives in the courtyard at Hougoumont



and Lunebergers. Following them were French infantry battalions advancing in three lines.

Wellington ordered three batteries into action to support them. Two batteries of nine-pounders concentrated on Reille's batteries and the infantry moving across the open ground. Meanwhile, Major Robert Bull's Troop of Royal Horse Artillery, which consisted of six howitzers, fired shells in a high trajectory that crashed down on the French assaulting the garden and Great Orchard. Bull's howitzers caught Bauduin's soldiers in the open outside of the woods Hougoumont. The shells burst in the air, raining shards of iron on the French line infantry.

After 30 minutes of hard fighting, the French drove the Anglo-Allied troops from the timber. The survivors from the woods joined Lord Saltoun's men, who had returned to the Great Orchard when the fighting began. One of the casualties of the first French attack was Bauduin, who had unfortunately received a mortal wound. Command of Jérôme's First Brigade devolved to Colonel Amédée-Louis Despans-Cubières.

Jérôme had no intention of limiting his attack to a diversion. In an effort to prove himself to his brother and fellow officers, he sought to capture Hougoumont. For that reason, he ordered his troops to fight their way into the stronghold. He fully intended to throw the full weight of his division against Hougoumont.

French axemen hacked openings in the two-metre-tall hedge so that French infantry could charge the walls of the estate and formal garden. Once openings had been made, French soldiers had to dash across 27 metres of open ground to reach the walls. British troops armed with Brown Bess muskets laid down a withering fire that left the lane strewn with French bodies. Standing behind each Coldstream Guard in a protected fighting position were two or three fellow soldiers passing him loaded muskets. This managed to double or triple the normal rate of fire for a soldier.

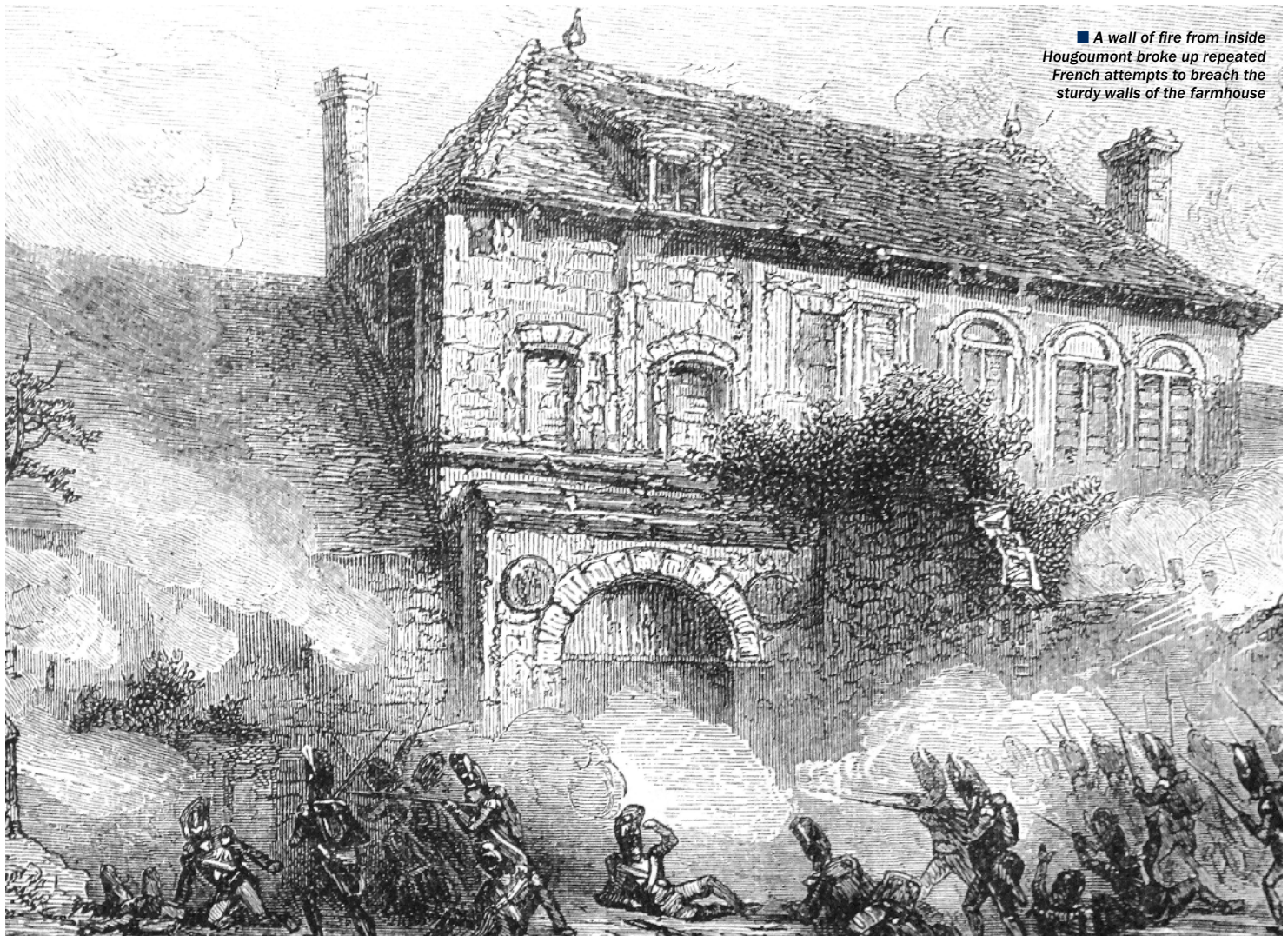
Before the first hour was over, Jérôme ordered General Baron Jean-Louis Soye to strike the chateaux from the west, while Jérôme directed General Cubières to continue his attack on the Great Orchard. He also instructed General Count Hippolyte Piré to send cavalry to support Soye's attack. A group of soldiers from the Light Company of the 3rd Guards blunted Soye's attack. Soye's men failed to force their way into the strongly barricaded south gate but had more

luck with the north gate. The British fighting outside the west wall of Hougoumont fell back north with Soye's troops hot on their heels. It was at that point that Sous-Lieutenant Legros and his storming party fought their way inside the north gate. It was the only time the French breached the compound that day.

Reille reinforced the attack on Hougoumont with 2,000 men troops belonging to General Jean-Joseph Gauthier's 1st Brigade of General Maximilien Foy's 9th Division. They launched a fresh assault against the Great Orchard. The French sought to outflank Saltoun and pry him from the orchard.

Seeing the blue-jacketed infantry in thick ranks moving towards the estate, Major-General John Byng, commander of the 2nd Guards Brigade, ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Home to lead 200 troops, including a company of crack grenadiers, to support Saltoun. Saltoun's men fell back to the Hollow Way, a sunken road that ran east-west on the far side of the chateau. As the French fought their way

“HE ORDERED HIS TROOPS TO FIGHT THEIR WAY INTO THE STRONGHOLD. HE FULLY INTENDED TO THROW THE FULL WEIGHT OF HIS DIVISION AGAINST HOUGOUMONT”



■ A wall of fire from inside Hougoumont broke up repeated French attempts to breach the sturdy walls of the farmhouse

east through the Great Orchard, Macdonnell's Coldstream Guards, who were manning the east wall of the garden, fired on them and inflicted heavy casualties.

Soye, who was directing the attack from the southwest against Hougoumont, ordered a 6-pounder howitzer rolled forward at 1.30pm. The gun was manhandled into position in the northeastern corner of the wood where it began firing incendiary shells at the roofs of the buildings. Realising the danger that the gun posed to those inside the compound, Saltoun led a sortie, which was spearheaded by the grenadiers, to silence the French gun. The small size of his force, though, was no match for the droves of French outside the chateaux. The French shattered the assault with sheets of musket fire.

To counter the threat posed by the artillery, Wellington dispatched Colonel Francis Hepburn to Hougoumont at 2pm with three companies of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Guards Brigade. He had orders to relieve Saltoun and try to retake the orchard. Hepburn eventually would relieve Macdonnell, too, and take charge of all of the troops defending Hougoumont. Saltoun returned to the First Division's position on Mount-Saint-Jean ridge with just one-third of his original force.

Reille ordered General Baron Gilbert Bachelu's 5th Division to attack Hougoumont striking due east against the orchard at 2.30pm. But

the attack was broken up by British artillery that shelled the French as they advanced across open pastures where they had no cover. Meanwhile, the French artillerymen manning the howitzer succeeded in setting afire the roofs of the buildings.

After the initial French assault on the Anglo-Allied centre was repulsed, Wellington dispatched large numbers of reinforcements to Hougoumont. The duke sent the remainder of the troops from the two battalions of the 2nd Guards Brigade – the 3rd Regiment and the Coldstream Regiment – into the chateau. In addition, he sent three fresh battalions: one Brunswick battalion and two battalions of the King's German Legion. This raised the defence of the estate to upwards of 6,000 troops. They were opposed by 14,000 French troops.

As the fire spread, Wellington sent a dispatch to Macdonnell instructing him to remain as long as possible in the burning buildings. When the roof and floors were about to collapse, he was to shift to the courtyards and the garden. "After [the roof and floors] have both fallen in, occupy the ruined walls inside of the garden, particularly if it should be possible for the enemy to pass through the embers in the inside of the house," wrote the duke.

A fresh French attack occupied the Coldstream Guards, preventing them from removing the wounded from the burning barn



■ A loophole in the garden wall at Hougoumont afforded the perfect firing position

before they perished. As the French launched their first cavalry attack on the Anglo-Allied centre at 4pm, troops of Foy's and Bachelu's divisions again attacked Hougoumont from the southeast but were repulsed. A final assault at 6.30pm by Foy's men also failed. When the battle was over, the British suffered 1,500 casualties and the French suffered 5,000 casualties at Hougoumont.



FRENCH FORCES FORWARD

NAPOLEON ORDERS THE CORPS OF COMTE D'ERLON FORWARD TOWARDS THE CENTRE OF WELLINGTON'S LINE AS THE BATTLE FOR HOUGOU MONT RAGES

From Napoleon's vantage point, Wellington's line along Mont-Saint-Jean ridge was not really clearly defined. Only the Dutch and Belgian troops, clad in their dark blue coats with orange facings, were visible in any concentration, deployed as skirmishers on the forward slope. Still, the French commander knew that his enemy lay waiting for him.

At 1pm, the French Grand Battery erupted. 88 12- and 8-pounder guns began an intense bombardment of the enemy positions. To Napoleon's left, the farmstead of Hougomont was wreathed in smoke and the incessant clatter of musket fire reached his ears.

The time had come to unleash the 19,000-man strong force of veteran infantrymen of the I Corps under Marshal Jean-Baptiste Drouet, Comte d'Erlon, against Wellington's centre, which was commanded by Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Picton. D'Erlon's four divisions stepped off amid martial music and shouts of "Vive l'Empereur!"

FORWARD UNDER FIRE

As the French infantry advanced with d'Erlon at its head on horseback, the soldiers trampled fields of tall rye. The guns of the Grand Battery fell silent while drummers continually beat the cadence of the *Pas de Charge*. British artillery took up a response against the massed formations of enemy troops, their fire tearing gaping holes in the French ranks as one brigade veered to the left to attack the farmstead of La Haye Saint, where soldiers of the King's German Legion had already opened a brisk, deadly fire against their flank. A few riflemen of the 95th Regiment of Foot joined in, firing from the shallow protection of a gravel pit and a small knoll to their rear until driven back by French cuirassiers screening the flank of the advance. An artillery battery beat a hasty retreat, encouraging the attackers to quicken their pace through the clinging mud.

William, Prince of Orange, hurried the Lüneburg Battalion of the 1st Hanoverian

Brigade forward, firing volleys into the French infantry from the garden at La Haye Saint. The movement exposed the battalion and French cavalry descended upon the infantrymen, slashing with sabers and lances. Unable to form defensive squares, the soldiers were run to ground and mercilessly sabered.

The Dutch and Belgian skirmishers of Major General Count Willem Frederik van Bijlandt's brigade had been roughly handled at Quatre Bras and began to break ranks as the French wave approached. Firing a few shots, they took to their heels, some running rearward toward the protection of the woods, while others rallied behind a pair of British brigades that had remained seated or prone during the early artillery bombardment, shielding themselves from destructive shot and shrapnel.

Observing the flight of the skirmishers, General Sir James Kempt ordered his brigade to form a line and advance toward the hedges along the crest of the Mont-Saint-Jean ridge.

■ Napoleon and his general staff survey the battlefield at Waterloo



Unable to see over the crest, the soldiers marched towards an adversary of unknown strength. One French soldier of the 28th Regiment of the Line stooped to adjust his boots as he slogged through the quagmire toward the crest of the ridge. A musket ball passed through his shako and creased his skull, inflicting a painful wound. Had he been standing erect, he would probably have been killed.

RISE IN RESPONSE

As they reached the hedges, the French infantrymen were startled to see three British battalions poised in defence. The attackers, disorganised and breathless from their march, attempted to deploy into lines and loosed an uncoordinated volley. In return, a concentrated, accurate volley from Kempt's disciplined ranks, only 40 paces distant, cut down the French soldiers in the front ranks like a scythe.

While some French troops tried to return fire, others turned to the rear and became jumbled with the trailing column. To exploit the French confusion, Picton ordered a bayonet charge shouting, "Charge! Charge! Hurrah!" Picton's luggage had not yet arrived at Waterloo, and folklore relates that he entered the fray either in a top hat and tails or his nightshirt. As he roared encouragement, a French musket ball fatally struck him in the head.

Hand-to-hand fighting ensued. Lieutenant RT Belcher of the 32nd Foot carried the regimental standard into battle and was confronted by a French officer intent on capturing the flag. "He suddenly fronted me and seized the staff, I still retaining a grasp of the silk," Belcher recalled. "At the same moment he attempted to draw his

BRITISH CAVALRY OFFICERS SUFFER

Some of the aftereffects of the charge

■ The Earl of Uxbridge led the British cavalry at Waterloo, tried to restrain the epic charge, and lost his right leg



While the British cavalry charge at mid-afternoon broke the back of Napoleon's thrust against Wellington's centre, the horsemen lost heavily. Many of them were shot down by infantry fire against their flanks or slain by French cuirassiers during the unrestrained continuation of the attack. Their officer ranks were decimated.

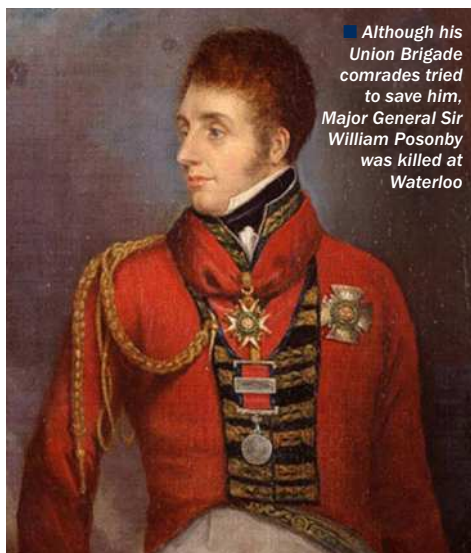
Among those killed were Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel Ferrior, commander of the Life Guards, whose squadrons charged the French as many as 11 times, several of these after Ferrior was slashed by a saber and pierced by a lance. Lieutenant-Colonel William Fuller of the King's Dragoon Guards was also killed. Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Robert Hill of the Horse Guards was shot through the shoulder and arm, saved from death or capture by the heroic intervention of cavalryman Tom Evans.

Sir William Posonby, commander of the Union Brigade, was surrounded by French lancers intent on taking him prisoner. He did not understand their language and hesitated as they ordered him to the rear. At that moment, a group of Union Brigade cavalymen spotted him and attempted his rescue. The French lancers were then obliged to kill Posonby with a single thrust of a lance.

The Earl of Uxbridge, the British cavalry commander, lost his right leg to an artillery shell late in the day. He was supposedly close to Wellington and exclaimed, "By God, sir, I've lost my leg!" to which Wellington replied, "By God, sir, so you have!" For a while, the amputated limb was displayed as a tourist attraction in the village of Waterloo. It was later buried.



■ General Thomas Picton reels in the saddle, struck by a lethal French musket ball after ordering a bayonet charge



■ Although his Union Brigade comrades tried to save him, Major General Sir William Posonby was killed at Waterloo

saber, but had not accomplished it when the Covering Colour-Sergeant, named Switzer, thrust his pike into his breast, and the right rank and file of the division, named Lacy, fired into him. He fell dead at my feet."

Wellington established a command position under a solitary elm tree near a crossroads and observed d'Erlon's assault. The action developed rapidly across the hedges and the dirt path that coursed the crest of Mont-Saint-Jean.

Major General Sir Denis Pack's 9th Brigade stood in line to Kempt's left. As the French troops topped the ridge at the junction of the two British units, the 28th Foot and 1st Foot unleashed a withering volley that caused the attackers to recoil momentarily. The momentum of the advance renewed, and the defenders began to give way under the pressure of greater enemy numbers. Further along, the 1st and 42 Foot put up a spirited defence, firing several destructive volleys into the French ranks. They attempted a bayonet charge that bought some time but were also pushed back steadily.

Napoleon's hope that the British line would give way hung in the balance, although Wellington's stout defenders had yielded ground but refused to rupture. Pack rode up to the 400 soldiers of the 92nd Foot (Gordon Highlanders) and shouted, "92nd, you must charge! All the troops in your front have given way!" To the skirl of bagpipes, the 92nd surged ahead in two lines, overlapping the French front, and opened fire. The French line staggered but came on relentlessly. It was apparent that the British were stretched to the breaking point. Victory, the Frenchmen believed, was at hand.

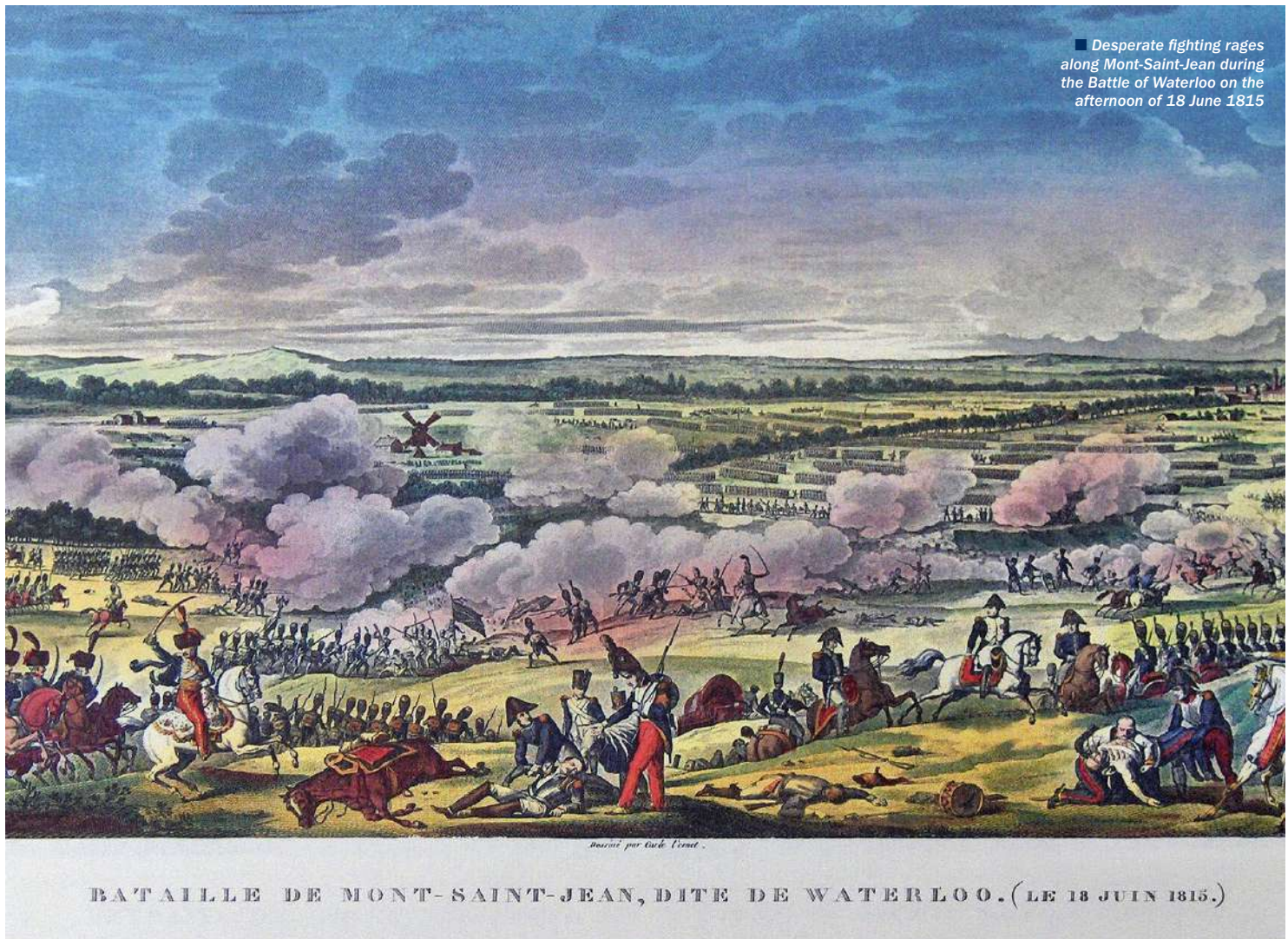
CAVALRY COMMITTED

As the British centre neared collapse, Wellington's cavalry commander, the earl of

Uxbridge, sensed that the defending infantry would struggle to hold the line and deployed his heavy cavalry along roadside hollows within supporting distance. To his right Lord Edward Somerset commanded about 1,000 cavalymen of the Household Brigade, including squadrons of the King's Dragoon Guards, the Horse Guards, and the 1st and 2nd Life Guards. To the left formed Major General Sir William Posonby's Union Brigade, including the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons, 1st Royal Dragoons and the Scots Greys, 1,700 strong.

The bugle notes sounded, and the horses moved forward at the trot, soon reached medium pace and then thundered toward the French infantry, who were largely unaware of the menace approaching in an avalanche of man and horse. "I pushed a soldier in front of me," recalled an officer of the French 45th Regiment of the Line. "I saw him fall at my feet from a saber blow. I raised my head. It was the English cavalry who were riding through our ranks and cutting us to pieces."

Uxbridge rode at the head of the Household Brigade west of the Brussels road, and the 1st Life Guards crashed into the French Cuirassiers who had decimated the Lüneberg Battalion minutes earlier, hacking them down with saber blows and heavy hilts smashed into their faces. The Blues of the Royal Horse Guards followed swiftly. The 1st Dragoon Guards and 2nd



“HORSES AND MEN THRASHED IN A CONVULSION OF COMBAT AS HARRIED FRENCH SOLDIERS BEGAN LYING ON THE GROUND TO ESCAPE THE SABER BLOWS OF THE MARAUDING BRITISH”

Life Guards chased the Cuirassiers that had engaged the 95th Regiment of Foot at a nearby crossroads and pursued them beyond La Haye Saint, where they fell upon French infantry that had no time to form defensive squares, inflicting heavy casualties.

Meanwhile, Kempt and Pack made way for the Union Brigade, which charged into the surprised French infantry. The 1st Royal Dragoons swept into a column of French troops that may have already been in retreat. Amid the chaos, Captain Alexander Clark spotted a French officer with the standard of the Imperial Eagle belonging to the 105th Regiment of the Line in hand. Clark spurred his horse forward and drove his saber deep into the Frenchman's back just above his kidneys. Corporal Francis Stiles grabbed the standard as Clark shouted, “Secure the Colour!” Stiles rode away with the trophy.

Horses and men thrashed in a convulsion of combat as harried French soldiers began lying on the ground to escape the saber blows of the marauding British cavalrymen. The Inniskilling horsemen found yet another hapless French

column on the verge of disintegrating, and they waded through and around the confused enemy along the roadway at the crest of the ridge.

The Scots Greys routed the enemy before them, and their countrymen of the 92nd Highlanders followed closely, joining them in the battle cry, “Scotland Forever!” French Lieutenant Jacques Martin remembered the horror: “In vain our soldiers rose on their feet and stretched their arms out to try to stab with bayonets at the cavalry mounted on the tall vigorous horses. Useless courage, their hands and arms fell together to the ground and left them defenceless against a persistent enemy who sabered without pity... It was there that I saw death closest...”

The frenzied British cavalrymen began to shout, “No quarter!” and slaughtered indiscriminately as reports of French treachery circulated. Sergeant Charles Ewart of the Scots Greys saw a young officer, Cornet Francis Charles Kinchant, shot by a French officer whose life Kinchant had spared moments earlier. Ewart wheeled in the saddle and dispatched the

Frenchman with a single stroke. He then rode on with the charge and killed three more enemy soldiers while claiming the eagle standard of the 45th Regiment of the Line.

ILL-FATED FOLLOWING

Their blood was up, and while much of the infantry prodded 2,000 French prisoners to the rear, the British cavalry continued in headlong pursuit of the broken enemy. Bugle calls to reform went unheeded, and within minutes the reach of the gallant but unrestrained horsemen had exceeded its grasp. Overextended, they began to absorb concentrated rifle fire from French infantry on their flanks, while enemy cavalry managed to slip behind them to cut off their route of escape.

Elements of the Scots Greys pressed among French artillery pieces, hacking down gunners and reaching enemy positions along an opposing ridge. Their horses were spent, however, and the Scots Greys and Inniskillings took severe losses from French lancers. Although they had broken the back of the French assault against Wellington's centre, the British cavalry ultimately paid a heavy price for its subsequent zeal. More than 1,000 of its number lay dead or wounded on the field. D'Erlon's corps had lost 5,000 whether they be killed, wounded or captured.

ON THE BATTLEFIELD: HOUGOUMONT

AS CANNONS BLAZED AND INFANTRY CLASHED, IT WAS LEFT TO THE COALITION HEAVY CAVALRY TO RIDE IN AND SALVAGE THE AFTERNOON FOR WELLINGTON

It had been a long time since Austerlitz, but the fire in Napoleon's belly was still strong as he rode up and down his ranks to cries of "vive l'empereur!" Hidden behind the brow of the ridge, Wellington's men waited for the inevitable artillery bombardment, while those garrisoned in the farm houses in front of the slope knew they would bear the brunt of the French attack.

Intended as a diversion while the main artillery pummelled the centre, Napoleon instructed his brother, Jerome, to lead an infantry division to Hougomont. Scaling the compound, they smashed through the gate but were cut down in the close confines of the farmyard. This tussle for Hougomont raged on for hours, and the diversion became a key part of the battle. Back in the centre, Napoleon believed that the artillery attack had gone on long enough, and sent in his infantry led by d'Erlon. The French general had faced Wellington before in the Peninsular War and was determined to have the better of him this time around. His assault began well, as he took La Haye Sainte and forced a retreat.

As the French moved further forward, they engaged the core of the coalition forces. Wellington's line was thinly spread and Napoleon hoped that this forward punch would split the allied forces and clear the way to Brussels. The French had the upper hand, but they hadn't counted on a mass counterattack led by the Earl of Uxbridge's heavy cavalry. 2,000 horses clashed with the infantry and sent them running back. The sudden and effective strike had evened up the battle but, as Napoleon readied his artillery and his own cavalry, the pendulum was about to swing again.

1 THE HOUGOUMONT FARMHOUSE

Napoleon's first objective is to take the small compound at Hougomont. Lightly defended by only a few allied companies, a mass infantry attack is repulsed just as the men in the courtyard near breaking point.

2 THE MAIN ASSAULT

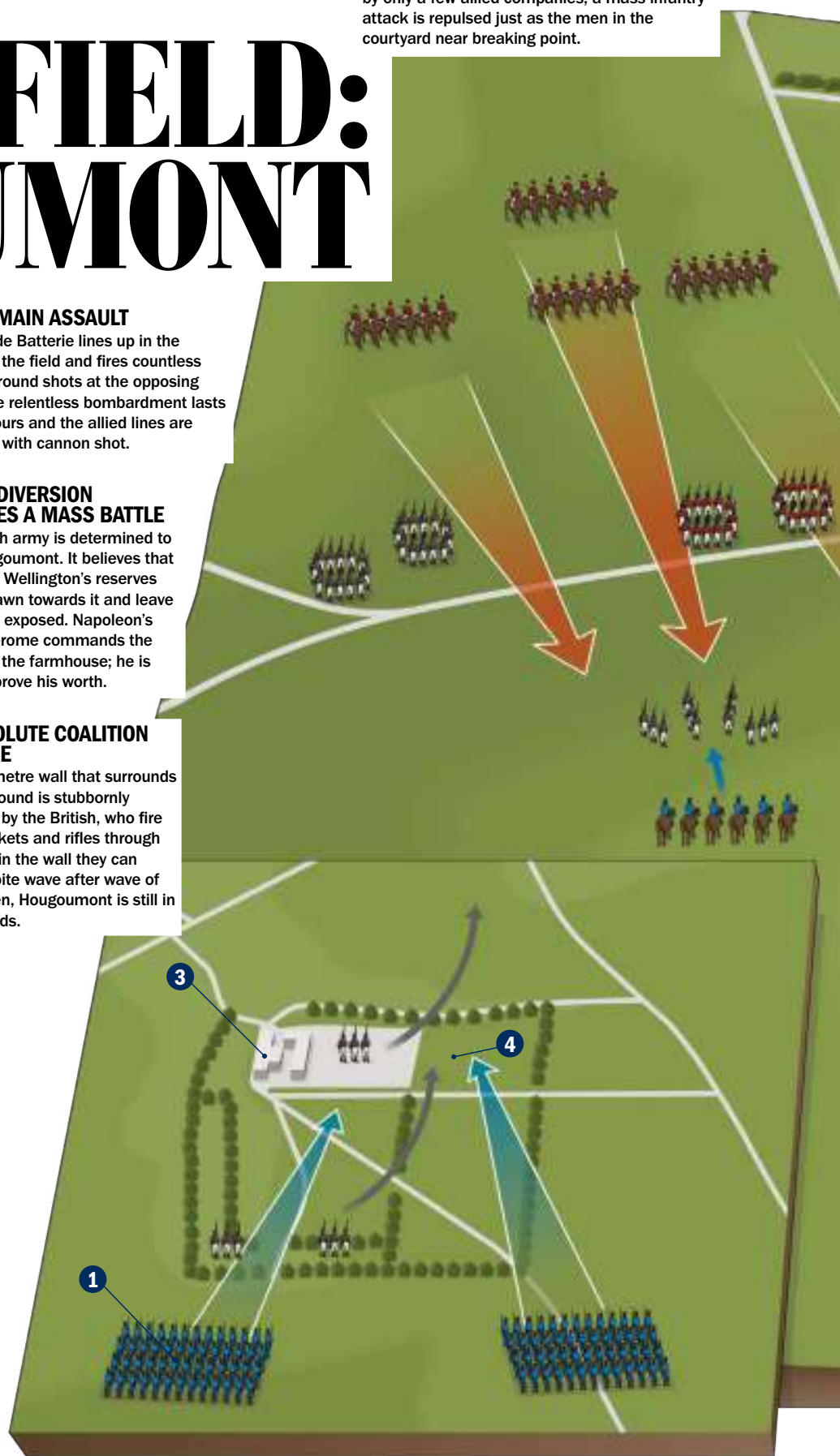
The Grande Batterie lines up in the middle of the field and fires countless bursts of round shots at the opposing ranks. The relentless bombardment lasts for two hours and the allied lines are peppered with cannon shot.

3 THE DIVERSION BECOMES A MASS BATTLE

The French army is determined to take Hougomont. It believes that if they do, Wellington's reserves will be drawn towards it and leave his centre exposed. Napoleon's brother Jerome commands the attack on the farmhouse; he is eager to prove his worth.

4 RESOLUTE COALITION DEFENCE

The two-metre wall that surrounds the compound is stubbornly defended by the British, who fire their muskets and rifles through any gaps in the wall they can find. Despite wave after wave of Frenchmen, Hougomont is still in allied hands.

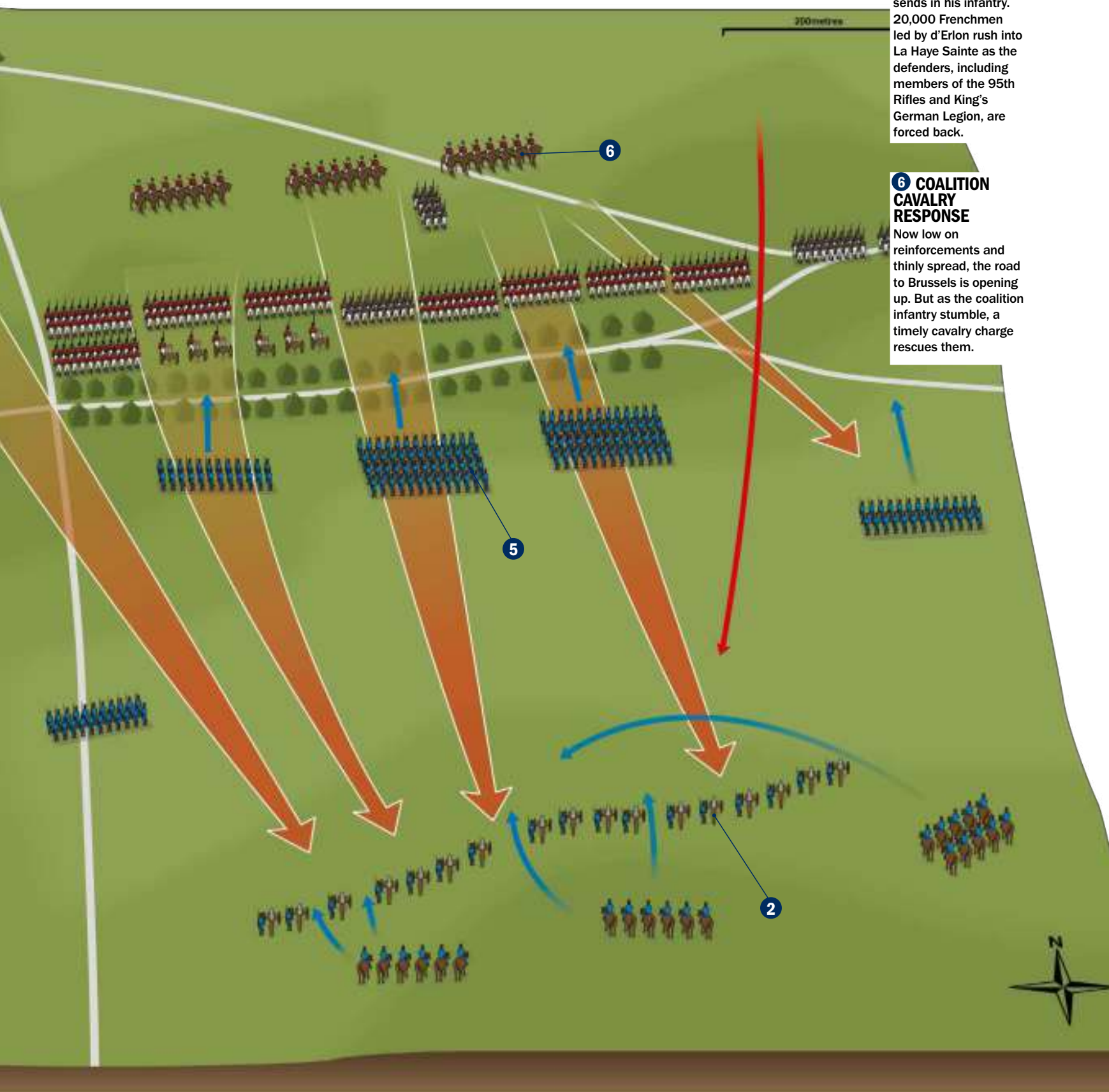


5 D'ERLON'S ADVANCE

After the artillery barrage, Napoleon sends in his infantry. 20,000 Frenchmen led by d'Erlon rush into La Haye Sainte as the defenders, including members of the 95th Rifles and King's German Legion, are forced back.

6 COALITION CAVALRY RESPONSE

Now low on reinforcements and thinly spread, the road to Brussels is opening up. But as the coalition infantry stumble, a timely cavalry charge rescues them.





MARSHAL NEY'S MISCALCULATION

COMMANDER OF THE LEFT WING OF NAPOLEON'S POWERFUL ARMY, MARSHAL MICHEL NEY SENT WAVES OF CAVALRY FORWARD AGAINST THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S CENTRE

As the decisive day wore on at Waterloo, Napoleon contemplated his next move. D'Erlon's I Corps had been repulsed with heavy losses. Reports were filtering in that the Prussian army was bearing down on the battlefield rather than turning toward home. Wellington's stalwart centre presented a more formidable obstacle than anticipated.

Napoleon knew that the keys to the position were still firmly in British hands. La Haye Saint stood firm, and the enemy troops at Hougomont were grimly holding, but the sheer weight of numbers committed to that struggle under the command of his brother, General Jerome Bonaparte, might break British resistance there. La Haye Saint, then, became the focus of his next assault, and he ordered Marshal Michel Ney, commander of his army's left wing, to renew the attack there.

Ney dutifully arranged for the renewal of fighting at La Haye Saint, concentrating two brigades of infantry to make the attempt preceded by another shower of shot and shell from the Grand Battery. While assembling the force, Ney observed significant movement among the British and Dutch-Belgian troops in Wellington's centre along Mont-Saint-Jean. Long lines of soldiers were streaming rearward. Ney's heart leaped. Was the enemy retreating? He believed that it was.

MOVEMENT MISINTERPRETED

Through the fog of war and the pall of smoke that swirled across the battlefield, Ney had actually observed the evacuation of hundreds of wounded British soldiers. Adding to Ney's

miscalculation, the ferocity of the French artillery's renewed bombardment had prodded Wellington to instruct his troops across the ridge to once again retire from the crest to safer positions on the reverse slope. This required a retrograde march of about 100 paces. Regrouping from their epic charge, the British Household and Union cavalry brigades were probably also visible milling about.

The sight of redcoats retiring was enough for Ney. He shifted focus to an all-out cavalry assault against what he believed was a crumbling enemy line. Even though his immediately available infantry was committed to La Haye Saint rather than Mont-Saint-Jean and the guns of his horse artillery had been detached to join the Grand Battery, he determined that the cavalry alone could prevail against this seemingly retreating army.

Ney mustered the IV Heavy Cavalry Corps, commanded by General Edouard Jean-Baptiste Milhaud, and the Imperial Guard Light Cavalry Division, under General Charles Lefebvre-Desnouettes, more than 5,000 veteran cuirassiers, lancers and dragoons that included some of the best-known regiments in the Grand Armée. The Chasseurs à Cheval were Napoleon's mounted bodyguard when the army was on the march, while the Polish Lancers and 2nd Lancers of the Imperial Guard, the "Red Lancers," were superb shock troops capable of exploiting any breakthrough.

After sending his infantry toward La Haye Saint at 3.30pm, Ney brought his cavalry leaders together. One of Milhaud's division commanders questioned the wisdom of cavalry alone assailing the British positions, but Ney brushed his objections aside bellowing, "Forward, for the sake of France!"

CAVALRY TOWARD CATASTROPHE

The Grand Battery continued to thunder as the French cavalry started off at a walk and gathered momentum along a front of fewer than 1,000 yards. British cannon replied, grape shot and canister tearing gaps in the ranks of the horsemen. Still they came, even as their own artillery ceased and their horses managed

a trot toward the foot of Mont-Saint-Jean to begin the troublesome ascent of the ridge.

From a distance, Wellington had seen the French horsemen assembling for the attack, and his order passed along the line, "Prepare to receive cavalry!" His troops formed quickly into infantry squares, four lines deep and bristling with bayonets. Those in the first line knelt with their musket stocks firmly planted in the sodden ground and their tips of steel angled menacingly. Although they were most vulnerable to attack at their points, the squares were much safer in repelling a cavalry charge than dispositions in line. They were placed within a few hundred yards of one another for mutual support. The British artillerymen loaded double shot into 56 artillery pieces and served their guns until the last possible moment, pouring fire into the waves of French cavalry, then bolting to the cover of the squares just as the enemy fell among their guns.

The French cavalry passed between Hougomont and La Haye Saint, trampling fields of rye before them, slowed by the muddy ground and the steady incline. They did not manage a full gallop until they flooded over the crest of Mont-Saint-Jean and were greeted with a daunting prospect. Rather than the enemy fleeing before them, they saw 18,000 British and Dutch-Belgian infantry arrayed in checkerboard style in 20 bristling squares.

While the lancers rode as close as they dared and thrust into the squares where possible, sabers slashed at the protected infantry formations. However, those who rode too close were swiftly cut down. British riflemen fired their muskets over heads of the soldiers kneeling in front with bayonets fixed. Wellington sought shelter within a square of German soldiers from the Brunswick Corps and watched as horses stalled, refusing to gallop into the walls of steel. As the French horsemen swirled around the abandoned British guns, their opportunity to spike the weapons was lost. Apparently they had advanced without the nails to render the weapons useless.

MERCER MAKES A STAND

Captain Alexander Cavalié Mercer, commanding G Troop, Royal Horse Artillery, refused to pull back from his guns, five 9-pounder cannon and a single 5.5-inch howitzer, disobeying Wellington's order to shelter in the squares. Mercer deployed his artillery behind the embankment running along a sunken road adjacent to the approach of the French cavalry, the muzzles of his guns just clearing its edge.

Mercer's battery suffered greatly but inflicted serious losses on the enemy, perhaps providing the pivotal defensive response of



■ Marshal Michel Ney leads a cavalry charge at Waterloo. His mistaken impression of a British retreat brought the French horsemen to ruin

BATTLE BEGINS

the entire action. When the fight was over, G Troop had lost five men killed and 15 wounded along with 69 horses, but 700 rounds had hit the French hard. Mercer was later promoted and wrote of his experiences in the *Journal Of The Waterloo Campaign*, published in 1870.

"On they came in compact squadrons," he recalled of the desperate French charge, "one behind the other...I thus allowed them to advance unmolested until the head of the column might have been about 50 or 60 yards from us and then gave the word, 'Fire!' The effect was terrible. Nearly the whole leading rank fell at once; and the round shot, penetrating the column carried confusion throughout its extent..."

REPULSE AND REGROUP

As the French vanguard hurtled forward, the trailing horsemen still labouring up the slope of Mont-Saint-Jean and over the crest pushed them ahead. In preparation for the enemy

attack, Wellington had ordered his remaining cavalry, the reorganising Household and Union brigades along with his light cavalry regiments and the Dutch heavy cavalry brigade, into positions safe from the initial French foray but advantageous for a counter-charge. When the order was eventually given, the British and Dutch cavalry slammed into the enemy, sending them reeling back down the ridge. British artillerymen emerged from the squares and fired briskly at the retreating Frenchmen.

Ney, who characteristically displayed great bravery and inspired his command, had four horses shot from under him at Waterloo. He was undeterred with the setback and ordered a second charge. The Grand Battery barked in support, but the British artillery responded with galling fire, the infantry squares spewed lead, and the fatigued British cavalry again sallied forth to repel the thrust.

Napoleon watched as the situation developed and muttered to his chief of staff, Marshal Jean-de-Dieu Soult, "This is a premature movement,

the results of which may prove disastrous. It is too soon by an hour, but it is necessary to follow up what has already been done."

When Ney approached, his chest heaving, to request reinforcements for yet another thrust at the British centre, Napoleon was visibly displeased but had no choice. He committed the III Cavalry Corps, under Marshal Francois



"WHEN THE ORDER WAS EVENTUALLY GIVEN, THE BRITISH AND DUTCH CAVALRY SLAMMED INTO THE ENEMY, SENDING THEM REELING BACK DOWN THE RIDGE"



■ On 7 December 1815, Marshal Ney was allowed to give the order to fire to the soldiers who shot him dead

Étienne de Kellermann, and the Guards Heavy Cavalry Division, led by General Claude-Étienne Guyot, another 5,300 horsemen and the balance of the French cavalry reserve, to the renewed effort. More than 10,000 horsemen were now consigned to the battle.

Within Kellermann's command were two regiments of dragoons, four of cuirassiers, and two of carabiniers-à-cheval, riflemen on horseback – effectively mounted infantry. Guyot counted the best cuirasseur regiments in the entire army under his leadership, including the Empress Dragoons, the Gendarmerie d'Elite, and the finest heavy cavalry in Europe, the Grenadiers à Cheval de la Garde Impériale, the elite of the fabled Old Guard, simply known to other French horse soldiers as "The Gods." Brass breastplates gleamed, and red crested helmets glistened. Their advance was an awesome sight.

The French cavalry assaulted the infantry squares and artillery positions on Mont-Saint-Jean for the next hour. It was an exercise in futility. The British and Dutch-Belgian infantry, though their morale wavered at times amid mounting casualties, continued to pour deadly fire at their enemy. Their grim determination was buoyed by superb discipline as the enemy mounted at least seven charges. Each time, as they were able, the artillerymen returned to their guns to fire as the French fell back. Lord Uxbridge's cavalry, depleted though it was, chased them back down the ridge to harry each withdrawal.



'I WILL ALWAYS BE FRENCH'

Having lost at the side of Napoleon, Ney sealed his fate



"Soldiers, when I give the command to fire, fire straight at my heart. Wait for the order. It will be my last to you. I protest against my condemnation. I have fought a hundred battles for France, and not one against her... Soldiers, fire!"

These were the last words of Michel Ney, one of the original 18 marshals of the French Empire, spoken on 7 December 1815. Six months earlier, Ney had fought his last battle at Waterloo. He had been at Napoleon's side during many of the emperor's great victories and was nicknamed "the bravest of the brave". However, with his leader's exile to Elba, Ney professed loyalty to Louis XVIII, the restored Bourbon monarch. At the beginning of the 100 days, he vowed to bring Napoleon back to Paris in an iron cage. When word of Ney's pledge reached Napoleon, the former emperor sent a message that tugged at his erstwhile lieutenant's heartstrings, offering a healed relationship. It read in part: "I shall receive you as I did after the Battle of Moskowa".

Ney rejoined Napoleon and commanded the left wing of the French army at Waterloo. Six weeks after the shattering defeat, he was arrested. During his trial for treason before the Chamber of Peers, Ney's attorney argued that he could not be tried in a French court since his hometown, Sarrelouis, had become part of Prussia by treaty. The marshal rose and bellowed, "I am French, and I will always be French," sealing his own fate. Three days later, Ney was executed by firing squad.

AN EXCRUCIATING EVENING

As the sun sank lower, Ney came to the awful realisation that his cavalry alone could not break the British infantry squares. At one moment, he was seen among temporarily abandoned British artillery positions, hacking with his sword in frustration at a silent cannon.

Ney had to have infantry support and turned to General Honoré Charles Reille's 8,000-man II Corps, previously reserved for the fight at La Haye Saint. At 5.30pm, these infantrymen attacked Mont-Saint-Jean.

However, the cavalry had already withdrawn, and the opportunity for a combined arms assault slipped from the French grasp. Wellington swiftly redeployed his own infantry into lines, and the foot soldiers exchanged heavy volleys. British artillery again took its toll.

In the hornet's nest of small-arms fire, the French infantry lost 1,500, who were killed or wounded in merely ten minutes. The attack was over within half an hour, and with it perished Ney's hope of breaking the rock-hard British centre. One of Wellington's soldiers later remarked, "Never did cavalry behave so nobly, or was received by infantry so firmly."

Casualties among the French horsemen were appalling. The Grenadiers à Cheval alone lost nearly 350 men, and the Empress Dragoons lost 416, roughly half their number. The overall casualty rate in Guyot's command was a grizzly 47 per cent.

With that, time was running out for Napoleon. Another issue was forcing his hand. The Prussians were coming.

PRUSSIANS ON THE FIELD

THE ADDED WEIGHT OF THE PRUSSIAN ADVANCE AT WATERLOO PRESSED NAPOLEON TO RISK THE FUTURE OF HIS RENEWED BID FOR POWER IN A SINGLE DESPERATE AFTERNOON

When the Duke of Wellington retired southward to good defensive ground after the fight at Quatre-Bras, he did so with a promise in his pocket. The Prussian army had been roughly handled at Ligny on the same day. Its commander, Field Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, might easily have ordered a general retirement eastward toward Prussia to protect his lines of supply and communication.

Instead, Wellington chose to stand and fight on the ridge of Mont-Saint-Jean. He did so because Blücher had pledged to come to his support. Despite the misgivings of his chief of staff, Field Marshal August Neidhardt von Gneisenau, Blücher committed to the decisive battle. Once the task was in his hands, Gneisenau displayed brilliant tactical skills, concentrating the scattered Prussian forces at Wavre. After dark on 16 June, the Prussian I and

II Corps marched to the Belgian town, while the III Corps, covering the retreat, joined the IV, which had not been engaged at Ligny, in the vicinity of Gembloux. Together these formations headed to Wavre that night.

Napoleon declined to immediately pursue the defeated Prussians, failing to order Marshal Emmanuel Grouchy to follow Blücher until late the next morning. Compounding the issue, the French were unsure of the Prussian intent.



Napoleon informed Grouchy that it was his responsibility to determine where the enemy was going and to prevent interference as the main army marched toward Wellington.

AN ELDER'S ENTHUSIASM

Blücher's contribution to the British – more accurately the Allied – victory at Waterloo is often overshadowed by other events of the campaign. However, there is no doubt that the Prussian arrival on the field on 18 June 1815 sealed Napoleon's fate. The 72-year-old Blücher, nursing scrapes and bruises sustained when his horse was shot from under him at Ligny, remained energetic and realised that the stakes were high.

A fire had broken out in the streets of Wavre, delaying the march toward Wellington for a while, but early on the morning of the 18th, Blücher ordered his IV Corps, under Marshal Friedrich Wilhelm Freiherr von Bülow, to begin its trek to Waterloo. Although the IV Corps had not been engaged at Ligny and was the most intact Prussian formation, its soldiers were footsore, having already been on the road more or less for two days. The II Corps,

commanded by General Georg Ludwig von Pirch followed. Then came the I Corps, under General Hans Ernst Karl von Zeiten. The III Corps, led by General Johann Adolf Freiherr von Thielmann, was ordered to guard the crossing of the River Dyle at Wavre for a time and fend off any French pursuit that might be looming prior to turning for Waterloo.

Although roughed up at Ligny with the loss of 12,000 dead and wounded, the Prussian army remained 95,000 strong. Strung out for miles, its march toward Waterloo was arduous as heavy rains had turned sections of dirt roads into pits of clinging mud. The leading elements of Bülow's 30,000-man corps stepped off at 4am, but the last of his command did not clear Wavre until six hours later, men slogging and horses straining to move 88 pieces of corps artillery over inhospitable terrain.

Blücher watched as one gun crew struggled to maintain the pace in the slippery mud, and he was seen leaning toward them from the saddle. "Come, comrades," he urged them. "You would not have me miss my word!"

Through the undulating countryside that was especially difficult in the area near Chapelle-St. Lambert, the Prussians pushed forward. The enthusiasm and personal charisma of their

elderly commander inspired them along the way, while Gneisenau was at his best during the effort. Within 48 hours, the leaders would manage to reorganise their army and put nearly 50,000 troops in position to deliver a decisive blow at Waterloo, turning the tactical defeat at Ligny into a strategic victory.

SLEEP WITHOUT ORDERS

On the night of 16 June, Marshal Grouchy reached Napoleon's headquarters at Ligny, seeking orders for the follow-up of the day's victory. He was informed that the deposed emperor had gone to sleep and could not be disturbed. No pursuit of the Prussians was ordered that night, giving Blücher a head start of several hours. When Grouchy returned to Napoleon's headquarters on the morning of the 17th, he was obliged to wait until 8, when the senior commander finally received him.

The two officers conferred while surveying the scene of the previous day's fighting at Ligny. At long last, at 11.30am, Napoleon ordered Grouchy to take command of the entire right wing of the French army, chase the Prussians down, and give battle as soon as he was able.

■ Prussian Field Marshal August Neidhardt von Gneisenau directs troops at Ligny. Gneisenau displayed organizational competency in the wake of defeat



■ Field Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher was at least 72 years old in this portrait. His Iron Cross was well earned



BATTLE BEGINS

Grouchy's 33,000 troops included the III Corps, under General Dominique-Joseph Vandamme, the IV Corps of General Maurice-Etienne Gérard, and the cavalry of General Claude-Pierre Pajol, comprised of the II Cavalry Corps commanded by General Rémy-Joseph Exelmans and the IV Hussars Cavalry Division under General Pierre Soult.

Grouchy quickly issued orders to his men to march toward Wavre as quickly as possible, but the response was slow and sluggish. While the roads were quagmires, the French troops had been cooking meals, cleaning weapons, and resting from the previous day's fighting. On the evening of the 17th, cavalry patrols sent ahead of the marching columns finally found the Prussian rear guard and confirmed that the enemy had concentrated at Wavre rather than marching for home.

DUEL AT THE DYLE

The pursuers bivouacked for the night and renewed their advance at 6am on the morning of the 18th. Again, progress was slow; however, Exelmans' cavalrymen found the rear guard of Thielmann's 17,000-man III Corps around 10:30am, and a brisk fight ensued. Vandamme's corps came up behind the cavalry, and volleys were exchanged along the south bank of the Dyle as its divisions were fed into the battle, which developed into an attempt to cross the river and drive the Prussians out of Wavre.

As Gérard's 15,000 men and more cavalry were committed against the strong Prussian positions, the sheer weight of French numbers began to press Thielmann back. However, it was late in the afternoon before Grouchy was able to cross the Dyle in force and position his

troops to capture Wavre. Rather than engaging in active pursuit of the main Prussian army on the 18th, Grouchy was drawn into a prolonged engagement with Thielmann, and at the end of the day the III Corps – although in a precarious position – continued to block his way. Bülow was still leading the Prussian vanguard toward the fateful town of Waterloo.

As the battle with Thielmann progressed, Grouchy and his lieutenants could hear the thunder of the cannon at Waterloo. Gérard advised him to “march to the sound of the guns,” but Grouchy demurred, choosing to continue executing his original orders. After Waterloo, Napoleon blamed his defeat on Grouchy, who spent the rest of his life defending his decision. Regardless, it was already too late to stop Bülow.

PRUSSAINS IN THE FOREST

Around 1pm on 18 June, even as Napoleon executed the orders for his initial assault against Wellington's centre on Mont-Saint-Jean, he received a disturbing report. Soldiers had been seen on his far-right flank, about 1,500 metres distant in the Bois de Paris. Troops were also reported at the village of Chapelle-St. Lambert about four miles off the flank. At first, it was hoped that the soldiers in the dense wood were from Grouchy's right wing. However, a few Prussian prisoners very quickly smothered that prospect.

Napoleon was undeterred, believing that only a single corps of Blücher's army at the most would have been capable of recovering after Ligny and reaching Waterloo. Still, he issued new orders to Grouchy to march on Waterloo with all haste and engage Bülow. This tardy order, for what it was worth, did not reach Grouchy until at least 8pm.

Furthermore, had Grouchy attempted to disengage from Thielmann at Wavre the tables would have turned. Grouchy would be fighting a troublesome rear guard action against Thielmann while the main Prussian army was already using the best available road toward Waterloo. His own troops would be forced to drudge across an indirect route through trees and thick underbrush.

As Bülow and his staff rode through Finchermont Wood to the fringe of the Waterloo battlefield, the panorama of the great engagement unfolded before them. Prince August of Thurn and Taxis, a staff officer, recalled, “Hard to believe as it may be, we could see into the rear of the enemy and could even make out with our telescopes how the wounded were being carried back.”

Rather than committing his corps to the battle piecemeal, Bülow was compelled to wait for the majority of his command to reach the field before taking offensive action. He had been in contact with Wellington by messenger since 10am and understood the sheer urgency of the situation.

Had Napoleon delivered a swift, heavy blow against Bülow soon after the Prussians were discovered, the threat to his right flank might have sputtered into nothing. However, only cavalry skirmishes took place as the decisive afternoon wore on.

“RATHER THAN COMMITTING HIS CORPS TO THE BATTLE, BÜLOW WAS COMPELLED TO WAIT FOR THE MAJORITY OF HIS COMMAND TO REACH THE FIELD BEFORE TAKING OFFENSIVE ACTION”



■ The future king of the Netherlands, William, Prince of Orange, has been praised and criticised for his actions during the Waterloo campaign

■ Field Marshal Blücher rallies his troops in preparation for an assault at Waterloo. Blücher's pledge hastened victory in the pivotal battle



A MILITARY MOMENT

Meanwhile, the Duke of Wellington's army fought for its life along Mont-Saint-Jean. After the battle, the duke remembered the excruciating wait for his allies. "Night or the Prussians must come..." he wrote, "The time they occupied in approaching seemed interminable. Both they and my watch seemed to have stuck fast."

As his IV Corps, including a pair of artillery batteries, a regiment of hussars, and two brigades of infantry, streamed into the Bois de Paris along four narrow, muddy tracks, Bülow surveyed Napoleon's extreme right flank. Blücher, on the advice of Gneisenau, had already determined that a frontal assault against the French would result in heavy casualties with only a slight chance of success.

Instead, Bülow was directed to thrust southwest toward the village of Plancenoit, east of Napoleon's headquarters at the inn of La Belle Alliance. Once the Prussians held the town, their artillery could unlimber within range of the Brussels road, and when the bulk of Bülow's corps arrived a general assault to the south would at least threaten Napoleon's rear, possibly severing the French line of retreat. The Prussian plan was risky, but if successful the dividend would be huge. The French army might be caught in a vice and destroyed. While Bülow waited, Wellington simply had to hold fast, fending off repeated French blows against his centre.

Around 4pm, while observing Marshal Michel Ney's cavalry assail the British infantry squares beyond the crest of Mont-Saint-Jean, Bülow realised the critical moment was at hand. Wellington's centre appeared on the verge of collapse. As his full corps pushed through the heavy forest, Bülow could wait no longer.

A COALITION VICTORY?

The victory at Waterloo has largely been remembered as Wellington's, buttressed by his statement that it was, "A damned nice thing, the nearest run thing you ever saw in your life... By God! I don't think it would have been done if I had not been there!"

True enough, the British troops at Waterloo – and Wellington in particular – displayed tremendous valour and superb tactical skill. However, the appearance of the Prussian army under Blücher quite likely delivered Wellington from disaster on Mont-Saint-Jean. The hammer blows of Bülow's corps were eventually successful, and Napoleon was required to divert troops to deal with the threat to his extreme right from his Prussian foes.

Another salient point to ponder is that nearly half of Wellington's command was of German origin. In total more than 60 per cent of his troops were of German, Dutch or Belgian lineage. Even within the British Army, the King's Own German Legion held La Haye Saint until its ammunition had been exhausted. These were soldiers of a unit established during the reign of King George III, who was also Duke and Prince Elector of Hanover and the third British king from the German House of Hanover. At least 17,000 troops were from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which included modern Belgium, under the command of William, Prince of Orange. The inevitable conclusion supports the assertion of an allied victory at Waterloo.



ON THE BATTLEFIELD: LA HAYE SAINTE

WITH THE FRENCH STILL IN THE ASCENDENCY, THE COALITION SOLDIERS HAD A CHOICE: HOLD OUT AGAINST A SUSTAINED OFFENSIVE OR BE SLAUGHTERED

As his cavalry disappeared over the ridge to attack the British squares, Napoleon may have heard the well-timed salvo from Captain Mercer's cannons as they stood firm against Ney's charge. Deadly case shot launched out into the horses, blunting the charge significantly. Many horses were taken down from under their riders, but the French kept coming as the British infantry fixed their bayonets, kneeled, and braced for the inevitable impact.

At almost the exact time Ney launched his charge, the Prussians arrived on the battlefield. After a gruelling 12-hour march from Wavre, Blücher had kept to his word, and he and 50,000 men were ready to enter the fray. Outnumbering the French three to one, the full might of the Prussian force ploughed into Napoleon's right flank in the village of Plancenoit. It was left to the French commander Lobau to repel this black-shirted enemy who were eager to avenge their defeat at Ligny.

Back in the centre of the field, General Kellerman and 3,500 lancer cavalry had come to the aid of Ney, with their long blades to thrust into the allied soldiers before they could raise their bayonets. This destruction went on for two hours as a cycle of constant artillery fire and cavalry hit Wellington's men. Some companies, like the Cumberland Hussars, lost their resolve and fled the bloodbath. The vast majority of coalition troops held firm though, and with each charge the French attacks were losing their potency.

The charge was called off at 6pm after the loss of life became too much. Napoleon's infantry and artillery had failed to adequately support the cavalry and the offensive was a costly failure. Despite their comrades successfully defending against the cavalry behind the ridge, the garrison of La Haye Sainte had reached breaking point and was forced to withdraw. Wellington had now lost this crucial centre and the French guns were able to move up to within deadly range of the British position – victory was still hanging by a thread.

1 FRENCH CAVALRY ASSAULT

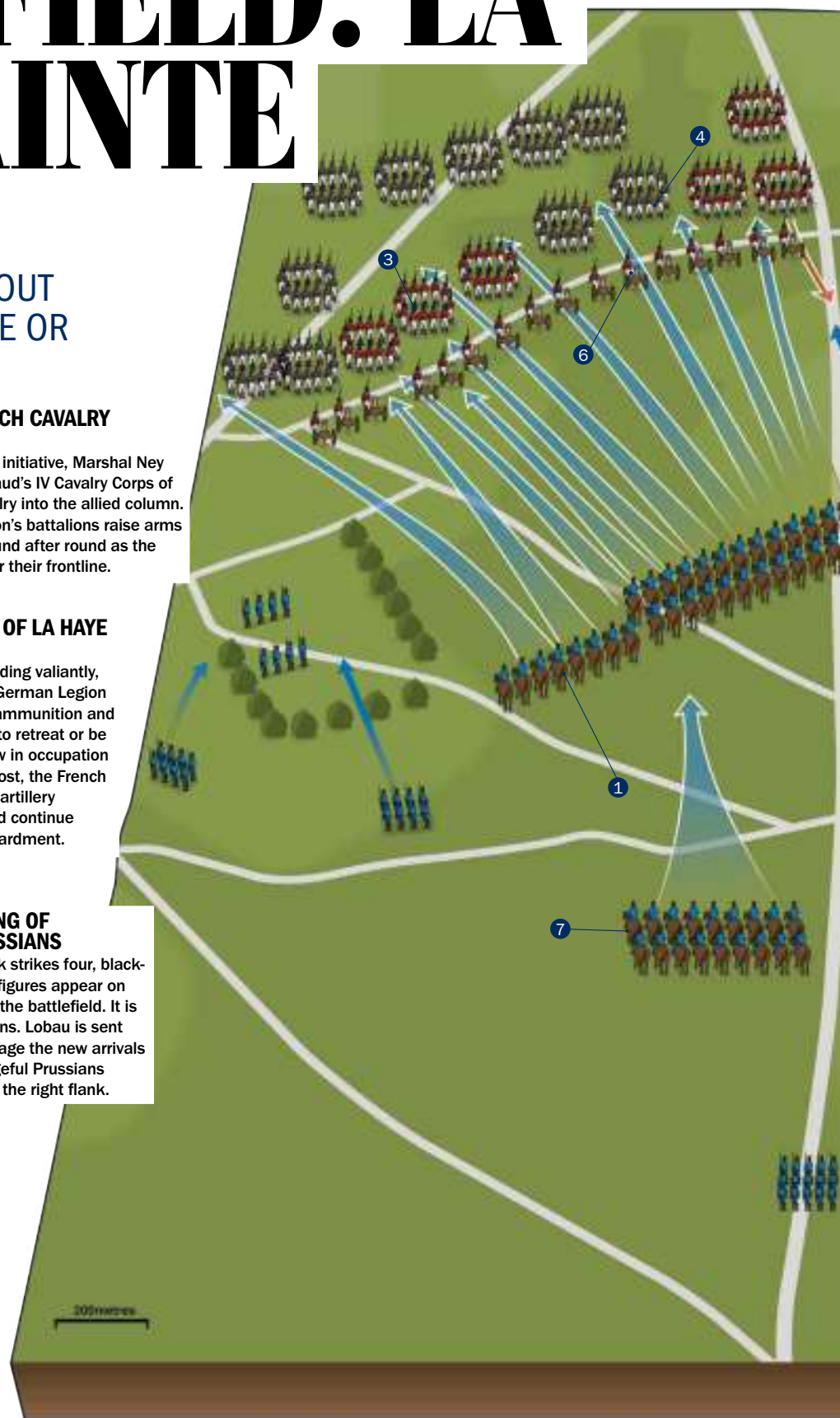
Seizing the initiative, Marshal Ney leads Milhaud's IV Cavalry Corps of heavy cavalry into the allied column. The coalition's battalions raise arms and fire round after round as the horses near their frontline.

2 LOSS OF LA HAYE SAINTE

After defending valiantly, the King's German Legion run out of ammunition and are forced to retreat or be routed. Now in occupation of the outpost, the French move their artillery forward and continue their bombardment.

5 COMING OF THE PRUSSIANS

As the clock strikes four, black-uniformed figures appear on the east of the battlefield. It is the Prussians. Lobau is sent over to engage the new arrivals as the vengeful Prussians smash into the right flank.



4 "PREPARE TO RECEIVE CAVALRY!"

The French cuirassiers arrive at the coalition lines and are surprised at how little effect the artillery has had. Close knit and strong, the allied ranks repel the 8,000 horsemen, and so begins one of the bloodiest stages of the battle.

3 SQUARE FORMATION

To combat the French cavalry advance, the allied battalions on the left tighten to form squares. Bayonets fixed, they brace themselves as the thunder of hooves draws closer. Wellington and his officers continually rally their troops as the heat of the battle escalates.

6 CAPTAIN MERCER'S ARTILLERY BARRAGE

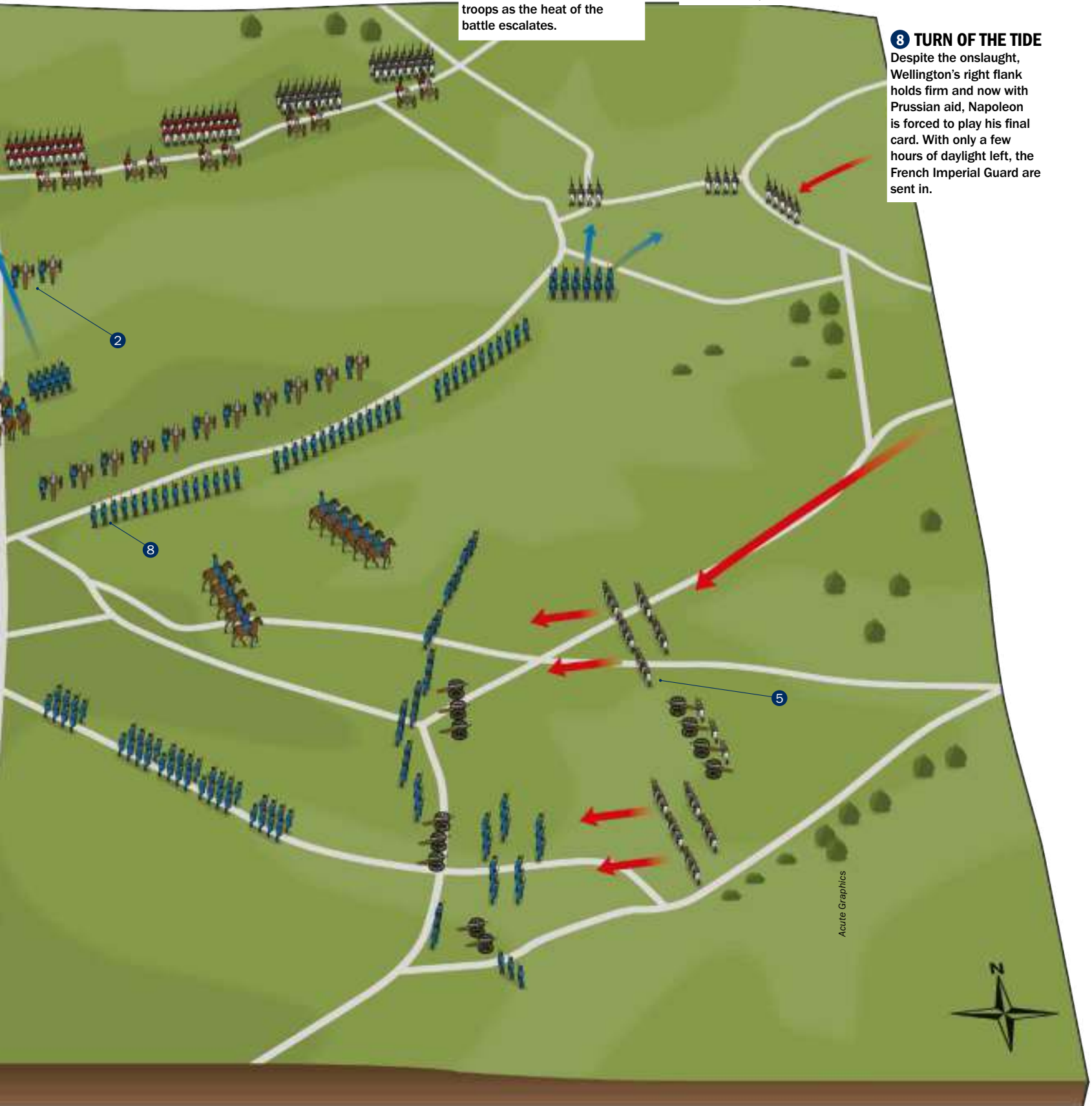
Led by Captain Alexander Mercer, canister shots are sent into the horsemen. At this point, the French artillery fire once again and are joined by 3,500 fresh horses led by General François Kellerman.

7 FAILED OFFENSIVE

Armed with lancers, Kellerman's riders lay siege to the squares but as the allies continue to hold firm, each subsequent attack loses more ferocity. At 6pm, Ney is forced to call off the offensive.

8 TURN OF THE TIDE

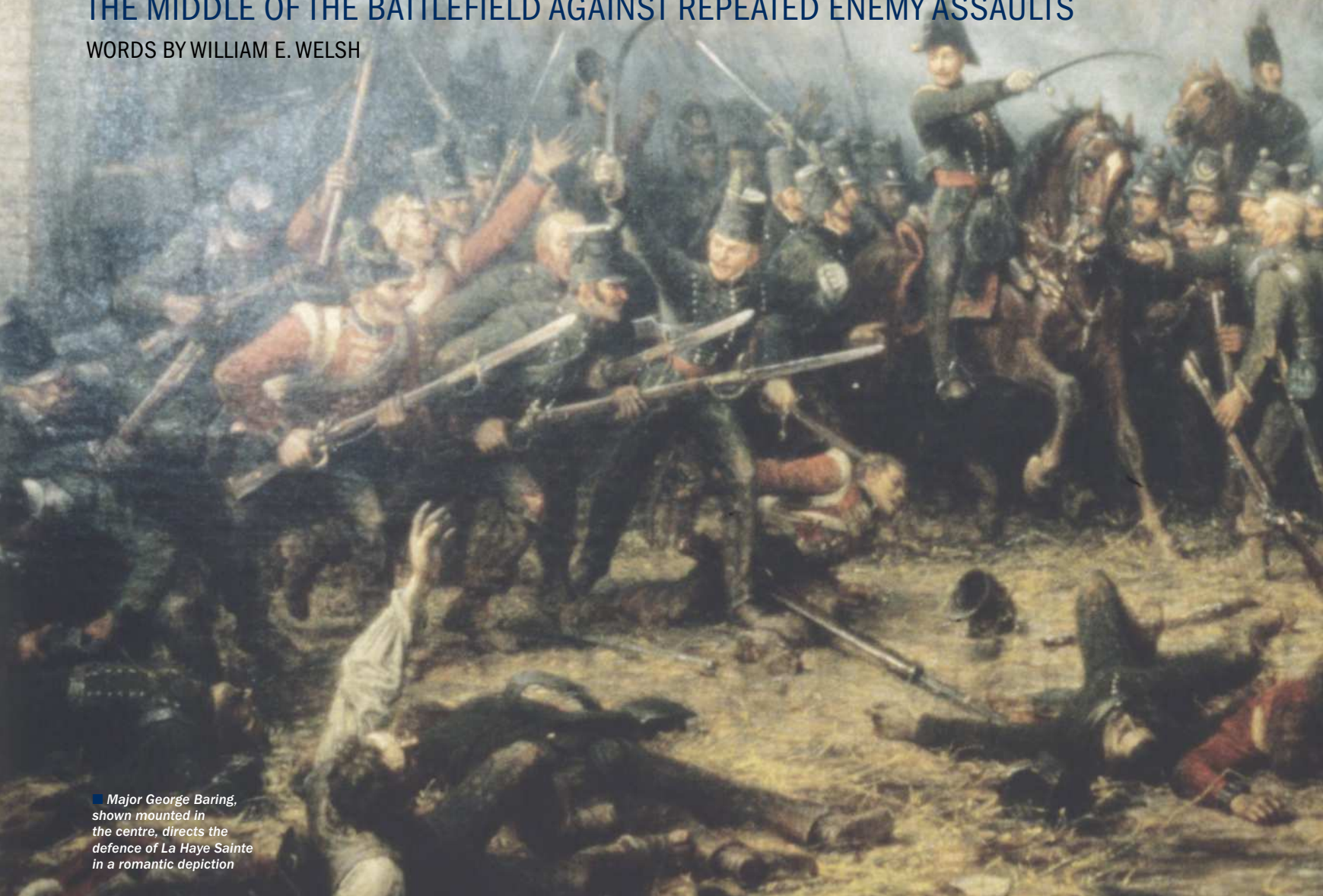
Despite the onslaught, Wellington's right flank holds firm and now with Prussian aid, Napoleon is forced to play his final card. With only a few hours of daylight left, the French Imperial Guard are sent in.



HELLISH STRUGGLE AT LA HAYE SAINTE

ELITE SOLDIERS OF THE KING'S GERMAN LEGION HELD A FARMHOUSE IN
THE MIDDLE OF THE BATTLEFIELD AGAINST REPEATED ENEMY ASSAULTS

WORDS BY WILLIAM E. WELSH



■ Major George Baring, shown mounted in the centre, directs the defence of La Haye Sainte in a romantic depiction

The men of the Luneburg battalion had just reached the orchard of La Haye Sainte farmhouse when a large number of French cuirassiers appeared out of the swirling smoke of battle on a ridge to their west. Officers shouted for the Luneburgers to form a square, but the order went completely unheard amidst the roar of battle.

The armoured horsemen swept down from the ridge. They hacked and slashed their way through the open ranks of the hapless German infantry. Some of the Luneburgers slipped into the safety of the farm's courtyard through a

gate but others panicked and ran north towards the Allied line atop Mont-Saint-Jean ridge. These unfortunate souls were sabered by the cuirassiers or shot by French infantry. It was a waste of badly needed reinforcements for the defenders of La Haye Sainte.

The 376 riflemen of Major George Baring's 2nd Light Battalion of the King's German Legion brigade arrived at the modest farm of La Haye Sainte in the soaking rain that fell the night before the battle. Baring's troops belonged to Colonel Christian von Ompteda's 2nd Brigade, King's German Legion, which was composed of

two light battalions and two line battalions. After driving off a French patrol, the shivering soldiers sought shelter from the weather in the complex and its outbuildings.

The farm, which consisted of a stable, barn, and piggery fronting a courtyard enclosed by a low wall, was situated 182 metres in front of the Anglo-Allied front line on the west side of the Brussels Road. It had a garden on the north side, and a large orchard on the south side facing the French lines.

Marshal Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, issued orders to Baring the following morning

to fortify the farm. His men were severely hampered in this task by a lack of hand tools. They used their bayonets to carve several large loopholes in the thick walls of the courtyard but were unable to build the platforms needed to fire over the walls. The Anglo-Allied soldiers encamped in the surrounding fields had removed the barn gate for firewood, posing a major weakness in the perimeter.

Baring posted three companies in the orchard, two in the compound and one in the garden. Fortunately, Baring and his men were not the only Anglo-Allied troops deployed forward of the main line atop Mont-Saint-Jean ridge – on the opposite side of the road was a knoll with a sandpit at its base. Wellington had ordered a 400-man battalion of the elite 95th Regiment of Foot to defend the position.

Napoleon's Grand Battery, which was composed of 76 field guns, began an ear-shattering bombardment of the Anglo-Allied center at 1pm. The shelling caused little damage to the troops inside La Haye Sainte who were protected by its sturdy walls – however, those in the orchard were showered with shrapnel.

The emperor entrusted the attack on the enemy's centre to General Jean-Baptiste d'Erlon, who commanded the French I Corps. The French foot soldiers advanced an hour later on a narrow front towards the Anglo-Allied line on Mont-Saint-Jean Ridge. Erlon entrusted the capture

of the farmhouse in their path to the hundreds of skirmishers who preceded the more densely packed line infantry.

The 18,000-strong French I Corps was composed of four infantry divisions with its left flank near the farm of La Belle Alliance. On the extreme left was Major-General Joachim Jerome Quiot's 4,100-strong First Division and to its right was Major-General Francois-Xavier Donzelot's 5,300-strong Second Division. These two divisions would play key roles in assaulting

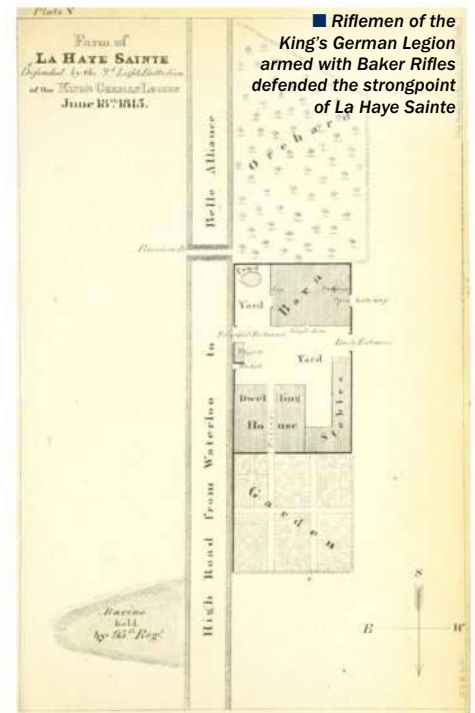
La Haye Sainte. The skirmishers reached La Haye Sainte about 15 minutes after they started out. Brigadier-General Claude Charlet's First Brigade of Quiot's division was the first unit to assault La Haye Sainte.

Baring, who had decided to remain on horseback to better direct his troops and also inspire them through example, was leading the defence in the orchard at the start of the French attack.

When the enemy skirmishers opened fire on the men in the orchard, Baring ordered them to lie down so that they would not be struck by the French fire. The French skirmishers outnumbered the men defending the orchard by three to one, and they quickly pried them from their first position.

Baring was not prepared to relinquish control of the ground outside the walls to the enemy just yet, so he ordered two companies from the orchard to form in the pasture adjacent to the west wall with orders to fight a delaying action.

The capture of La Haye Sainte gave the French a defensible position and significant advantage against Wellington and his army



“THEY USED THEIR BAYONETS TO CARVE SEVERAL LARGE LOOPHOLES IN THE THICK WALLS”



■ The King's German Legion returns in triumph to Hanover following its victory at Waterloo

BATTLE BEGINS

As their casualties began to mount, Baring ordered the men to retreat into the barn.

On the east side of the farmhouse, some of Baring's men initially fought from behind a makeshift barricade they had erected in the road for protection. But the French soon outflanked the position, and the Germans had no choice but to fall back to the courtyard through the main gate. Some of them climbed onto the roof of the piggery and took up prone firing positions.

By firing through the loopholes and from atop the roof of the piggery, Baring's men felled large numbers of French who were attacking the farm from the east. A burly French sapper named Lieutenant Vieux began chopping at the main gate with a sharp axe, but he stopped after being wounded twice.

The overall responsibility for the attack on the Anglo-Allied centre rested with Marshal Michel Ney. He had directed his adjutant, Colonel Jean Louis de Crabbé, to support d'Erlon's infantry attack with cuirassiers from the IV Cavalry Corps. Crabbé led his heavy cavalry forward in a column to assist the infantry attacking the farmhouse. The horsemen trotted unseen on the far side of a low ridge between Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte.

Wellington initially refrained from sending reinforcements to Baring for fear they would be cut off before they could reach the farm. However, Major-General Friedrich von Kiemannsegg, who commanded the 1st Hanoverian Brigade, was not as savvy at Wellington. He ordered Lieutenant-Colonel August von Klencke to lead the 600 men of his Luneburg light battalion to assist Baring. After the Lunebergers arrived in the orchard, Crabbé's cuirassiers charged them before they could form a square. They inflicted 50 per cent casualties on the battalion and scattered the survivors.

Inspired by the cavalry attack, the French infantry redoubled their attempts to gain entry to the courtyard. Some of the French shoved their arms through the large loopholes in the walls trying to wrest the rifles from the defenders' hands. Others attacked the company of German riflemen deployed in the garden.

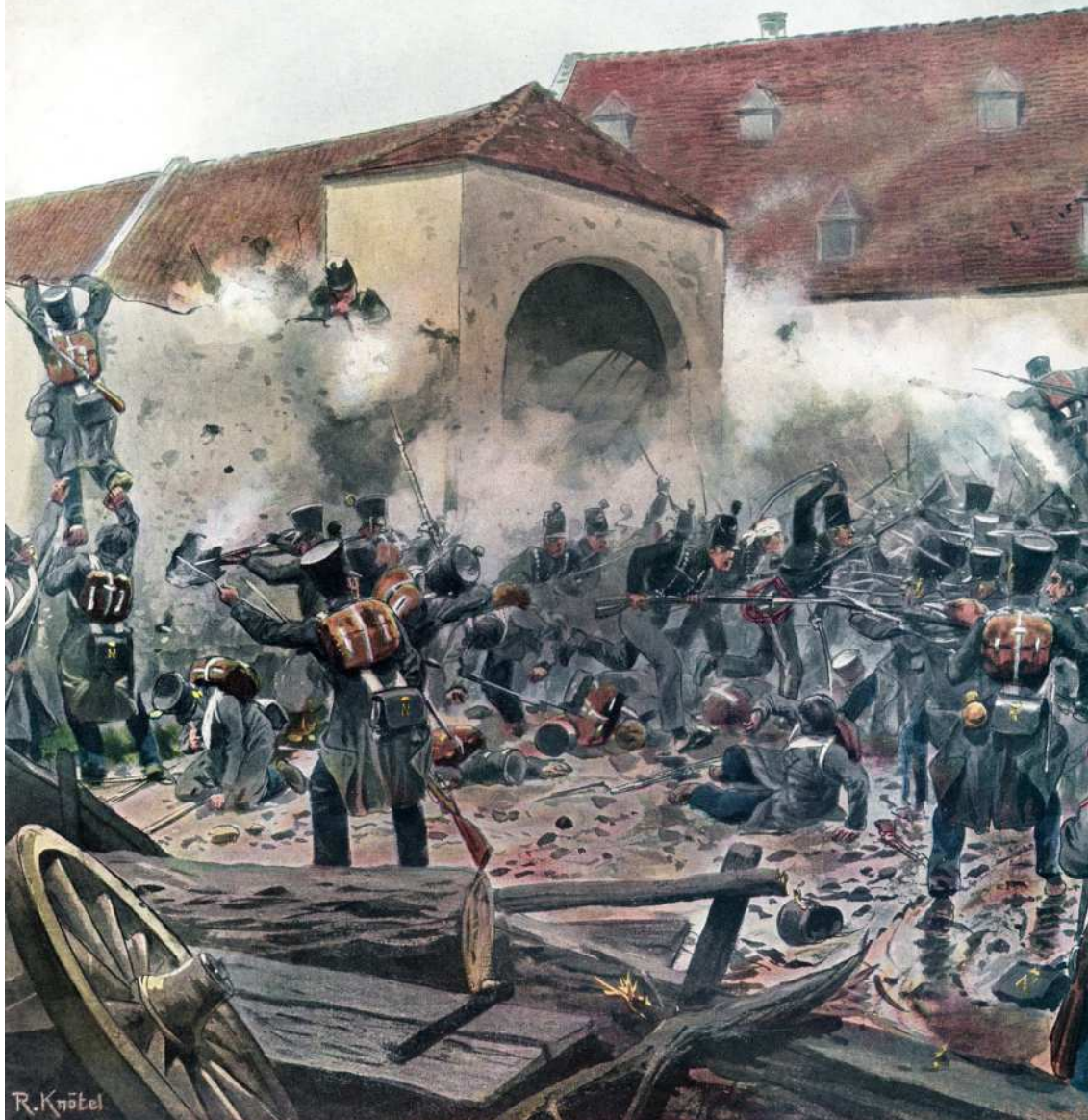
Baring and his worn-out riflemen received a 30-minute respite when Lieutenant-General Henry Paget sent the Household and Union cavalry brigades against d'Erlon's infantry corps. Anglo-Allied infantry surged forward to round up as many as 3,000 Frenchmen cut off as the British cuirassiers swept the field.

Baring took advantage of the lull to send a request for rifle ammunition to Ompteda. With the French temporarily forced back, Wellington sent two companies from the 1st Light Battalion to augment Baring's command. These men joined those already deployed in the garden.

After the British cavalry had blown its charge, Napoleon cobbled together approximately 3,000 infantry from brigades of the I Corps with their morale intact that had not been wrecked by the British cavalry charge. He ordered Ney to launch a fresh attack on the Anglo-Allied centre. Although the best way to capture La Haye Sainte at that point would have been to send a battery forward to knock down its walls, Napoleon feared the gunners would be exposed to cavalry sorties or sharpshooters.

Shortly after 3pm, the French infantry surged forward again. One battalion of French infantry

■ *The spearhead of the French main attack against the Anglo-Allied centre ultimately overwhelmed the defences of La Haye Sainte*



“THE FRENCH MUSKETEERS TOOK UP FIRING POSITIONS BEHIND THE BODIES OF THEIR FALLEN COMRADES”

assailed the west side of the farm, while another assailed the east side. French foot soldiers once again tried to gain control of the loopholes by reaching into them to grab enemy rifle barrels, and this technique paid off when they gained control of one loophole and began through it into the courtyard. The musketeer shooting through the loophole was able to keep up a steady fire because his fellow soldiers kept passing loaded guns to him.

The French repeatedly stormed the open gate leading into the barn but their charges were shattered by the Germans' stinging rifle fire. Bodies lay in piles near the passageway. The French musketeers took up firing positions

behind the bodies of their fallen comrades.

Having failed to receive additional ammunition, Baring repeated his initial request to Ompteda for a resupply.

After nearly an hour of desperate fighting between opposing infantry at La Haye Sainte, Ney mistook the redeployment of some British units to the reverse slope of Mont-Saint-Jean as the start of a British withdrawal and he therefore sent his cavalry forward in an all-out attack. Instead of advancing over the same ground as d'Erlon's troops, the 5,000 horsemen swept north towards the British front line through the fields between Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte. The cavalry attack failed.



■ The Baker rifle had greater range and accuracy than the French Charleville musket



BAKER RIFLE OUTCLASSED FRENCH MUSKET

The ability of Major George Baring's 2nd Light Battalion of the King's German Legion brigade, which was composed of German expatriates, to hold off the large number of French attacking La Haye Sainte can be attributed in part to their weapons and training.

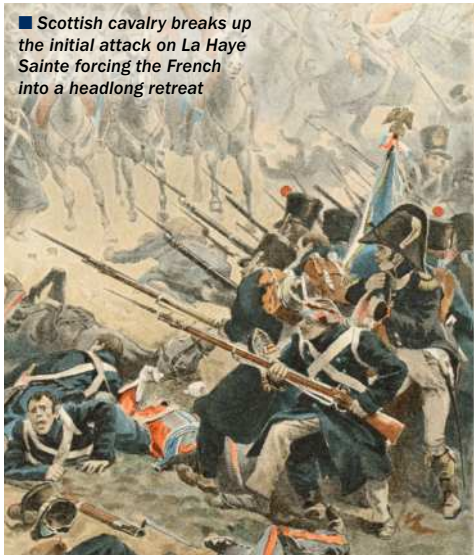
The light company soldiers of the brigade went into battle armed with the Baker rifle. Although it had drawbacks, it also offered advantages. The flintlock rifle took more time to load than the smoothbore French Charleville musket because it was more difficult to tamp the bullet through its grooved barrel.

Additionally, it didn't use a prepared cartridge but instead required a soldier to pour powder from a flask the old-fashioned way. This meant the Germans got off one shot per minute

compared to two or three per minute by their opponents. But otherwise it had significant advantages. One of these was that it had greater range and accuracy than the French musket. The Baker Rifle was accurate up to 182 metres, compared to the Charleville's effective range of 68 metres. Another advantage was that its shorter barrel was more suitable for firing prone than the French musket.

Part of the light company's training, which came into play in the defence of the farm when fighting on open ground in the orchard, garden or adjacent fields, was to fight in pairs. One man fired while the other either reloaded or furnished covering fire. This facilitated a tight bond between the two men in which each looked out for the other's welfare.

■ Scottish cavalry breaks up the initial attack on La Haye Sainte forcing the French into a headlong retreat



At 5pm, Napoleon ordered Ney to launch another attack on the Anglo-Allied centre using a mixed force of cavalry and infantry. On the opposite side of the battlefield, Wellington sent approximately 250 soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 2nd Nassau Regiment, to support Baring. When the French infantry assailed the farmhouse for the third time, they tried to set fire to the barn. Fortunately for the defenders, the Nassauers carried kettles with them as part of their mess kit, and they filled the pots with water to douse the growing flames.

After the French withdrew, Baring made a third request for ammunition. Like the other requests, this one also went unheeded. When the French launched a fourth attack, Baring's men only had enough rounds to fight for the first few minutes of the attack.

At 6pm, Baring ordered his men to evacuate the farm. He instructed them to withdraw slowly from one position to the next until they reached the Anglo-Allied main line. They first fell back to the garden, then to the sandpit, and finally to the ridge. Baring lost approximately 40 per cent of his force.

Wellington was distraught by the loss of La Haye Sainte. But Baring was not to blame – the reason they had to leave the farm was a lack of ammunition, and Wellington's staff was responsible for making sure they had sufficient ammunition. It was a major blunder.

The French captured the farm too late for Napoleon to exploit his gain. By the time the French occupied it, Napoleon was trying to prevent the Prussians from turning his right flank and cutting off his retreat.

Napoleon failed to send enough troops to take La Haye Sainte and Wellington realised the site's strategic importance nearly too late

RUPTURE AND REGRET

WITH WELLINGTON'S CENTRE VULNERABLE, NAPOLEON SUMMONED THE OLD GUARD, HIS FINEST TROOPS, FOR A DECISIVE ASSAULT – BUT THE PRUSSIANS PUSHED AHEAD AT PLANCENOIT



■ Marshal Blücher lies trapped under his dead horse at Ligny and barely escapes from the field with his life

Napoleon Bonaparte, former emperor of France, sat astride his majestic gray Arabian horse, Marengo, and surveyed the field at Waterloo. On 18 June 1815, one of the longest days of the year, the afternoon of decision brought clarity. The hard-pressed defenders of La Haye Sainte held out but perhaps one more strong push would wrest the farmstead from the dwindling numbers of the King's German Legion.

It was 6pm when Marshal Michel Ney led the renewed assault against La Haye Sainte, and Napoleon hoped that the centre of the duke of Wellington's line on Mont-Saint-Jean might finally rupture. Still, developments on the French right flank had required attention. For an hour and a half, elements of General Friedrich Wilhelm Freiherr von Bülow's IV Corps of the Prussian army had been pressing through the Bois de Paris into the village of Plancenoit, which lay to the southeast of Napoleon's headquarters at La Belle Alliance. Once it became apparent that the Prussians were arriving in force, Napoleon

“THESE 1,100 SOLDIERS OF THE ELITE OLD GUARD, IN THEIR DISTINCTIVE BEARSKIN CAPS, DROVE THE PRUSSIANS BACK WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT”

ordered 10,000 troops of the VI Corps, under Marshal Georges Mouton, Comte de Lobau, to face eastward at a right angle to the French line. Lobau rushed a brigade into Plancenoit, which was dominated by its large stone church and accompanying cemetery with a semicircular stone wall and tall trees dotting the landscape.

PRUSSIAN PUSH AT PLANCENOIT

Bülow conferred with his senior commander, Field Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher. With his own right flank anchored at the town of Fichermont and contact established with German troops from the duchy of Nassau

on Wellington's extreme left, Bülow sent two brigades of infantry against Plancenoit at 4.30pm. If the Prussians could secure the town, they might strike southward behind La Belle Alliance and cut off Napoleon's line of retreat.

Lobau stretched his corps left to cover the villages of Smohain and Papelotte at the junction with the main French line and then to Plancenoit to support troops already engaged in the street brawl there. Lobau had won the race to the village. French soldiers occupied the cemetery wall while sharpshooters climbed the trees. They occupied houses, shoving furniture against the doors to barricade themselves in. Soon, the Prussians hit Plancenoit from left and right, two battalions of the 1st Silesian Landwehr and two

of the 15th Regiment thrusting ahead on both sides of the road from Wavre while a pair of artillery batteries opened fire.

Although the Prussian presence had required Napoleon to redeploy Lobau's reserve troops that might have further pressed Wellington's centre, nearly an hour of fighting at Plancenoit had accomplished little else for Blücher, now in personal command of the attack. When another infantry battalion and additional artillery came up at 5.30pm, the Prussian assault intensified. The big guns raked the cemetery with canister, chewing the trees into mangled pulp and driving the French from the cemetery wall, even firing a few shots at La Belle Alliance, where Napoleon felt the earth tremble. With a yell, the Prussians rushed forward with bayonets fixed and drove the French out of Plancenoit.

Aware of the mounting threat, Napoleon ordered eight battalions of his elite Imperial Guard, 4,200 men of the Young Guard under General Guillaume Philibert Duhesme, to reinforce Lobau. This spirited attack ejected the Prussians from the cemetery and surrounding area. Blücher worried. Plancenoit was a tough nut to crack.

The II Corps of the army, under General Georg Ludwig von Pirch, was arriving but it was painfully slow. Wellington's centre might implode at any moment. Just then, a request for reinforcements arrived from General Johann Adolf Freiherr von Thielmann, commanding the Prussian III Corps, which was under attack from Marshal Emmanuel de Grouchy's force at Wavre.

Both Blücher and his chief of staff, Marshal August Neidhardt von Gneisenau, realised the gravity of the situation. Taking Plancenoit would, they believed, crisply turn the tide at Waterloo. Capturing the moment succinctly, Gneisenau dictated a reply to Thielmann, which an aide scribbled on paper. "...He is to dispute with all his strength every step the enemy makes forward, for even the greatest losses to his corps would be more than outweighed by a victory over Napoleon here."

INTO THE TOWN AGAIN

As two brigades of II Corps reached Waterloo, Gneisenau personally led another attack on Plancenoit, forcing the Young Guard back. Lobau retreated towards a ridgeline near the Brussels Road. With the Prussians in possession of the village and the I Corps of General Hans Ernst Karl, Graf von Zieten, finally arriving in significant numbers and poised to bolster Bülow, the Prussians had gained the upper hand.

Napoleon, however, reacted quickly, detaching two more battalions of his Imperial Guard to counterattack the Prussians at Plancenoit. These 1,100 soldiers of the elite Old Guard, in their distinctive bearskin caps, drove the Prussians back without firing a shot. Although they outnumbered the attackers considerably, the Prussians quickly gave way and the French flank was temporarily secured once again.

Meanwhile, Zieten made a crucial decision. An existing order had directed him to support Bülow, and he had observed the fight for Wellington's weakened centre. Zieten ordered his command to continue towards Bülow's IV Corps. At the last moment, General Karl Freiherr von Müffling, Blücher's liaison with Wellington's



■ During a meeting prior to Waterloo, Blücher pledges to come to the support of Wellington in the looming battle

BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN

As the Prussian army retired in disorder after its defeat at Ligny, its commander, Field Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, was lying trapped beneath his dead horse. For several hours, the 72-year-old who had come out of retirement to command more than 120,000 men lay unable to move. French cavalry rode over and around him without noticing as he lay under a greatcoat thrown across his prostrate body by his aide, General August Ludwig von Nostitz.

Although unable to resume immediate command of the army, Blücher ordered his chief of staff, Field Marshal August Neidhardt von Gneisenau, to concentrate the army at Wavre, where it might move to the assistance of Wellington at Waterloo. Gneisenau had preferred a withdrawal to Liege, closer to Prussia, but did

as he was commanded. Meanwhile, Blücher was extricated from his predicament and dressed his wounds after thoroughly washing them in a solution of garlic and rhubarb. The old soldier took the time for a few draughts of schnapps to ease the pain and then set about the business of contributing to the defeat of Napoleon.

During the difficult march to Waterloo, he was reported as saying, "Forward! I hear you say it is impossible, but it has to be accomplished! Push yourselves, my children, and we will have victory!" Despite his age, his physical condition and his recent defeat, Blücher persevered to become a hero of Waterloo. He later visited London and received the thanks of the British government for his role in the battle. Blücher died in 1819 at the age of 76.

BATTLE BEGINS

army, rode up to plead with Zieten to turn I Corps around and head for Wellington's left flank. A quick reassessment convinced Zieten to change direction. These reinforcements on his left allowed Wellington to transfer troops to his threatened centre during its greatest peril.

OLD GUARD FORWARD

At around 7pm, Napoleon, with his right flank stabilised, turned again to try and deal with Wellington once and for all. Finally, Ney had captured La Haye Sainte, and the moment had come to commit the balance of the French army to exploit the hard-won gains.

Although two battalions of the Imperial Guard were at Plancenoit fighting the Prussians, the remainder of these elite troops – 12 battalions of the Old and Middle Guard – were a formidable force. French batteries pounded the British centre 274 metres from La Haye Sainte, and Napoleon ordered Ney to lead the cream of his army in the decisive attack against Mont-Saint-Jean. Two battalions of the Old Guard would remain at La Belle Alliance as Napoleon's personal security force, while another was to be held in reserve.

Just after 7pm, the Middle and Old Guard stepped off in two echelons with Napoleon at their head astride Marengo. 548 metres from the enemy line, he turned to urge his men forward. The cry of "Vive l'Empereur!" rose from the massive infantry squares.

The British artillery opened their offensive with devastating effect, blasting gaping holes in the French formations that stretched 70 soldiers across. As the waves of attackers grew even closer, the artillerymen fired canister rounds that essentially turned their cannons into giant shotguns. Troops of the battered I Corps, under Marshal Jean-Baptiste Drouet, Comte d'Erlon, and the II Corps of Marshal Honoré Charles Reille joined in.

The first echelon of the Old Guard marched up the slope and encountered troops from Brunswick and Nassau, just 100 paces beyond the crest. As the volleys grew in intensity, the Germans began to retire. Inexorably, the Old Guard pressed on. William, Prince of Orange, a senior allied commander, was seriously wounded. Sweeping past abandoned artillery pieces, the French pushed the Nassau and Brunswick troops and General Colin Halkett's 5th Brigade, 3rd Division, steadily back.

Wellington moved among his Guards brigades, which were made up of veterans of campaigns against the French on the Iberian Peninsula. These troops had been ordered to lie down among the tall rye grass to escape the shell bursts and shrapnel of the artillery bombardment that preceded the Imperial Guard assault. The 2,000 men of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 1st Foot Guards Regiment, under General Peregrine Maitland, were nearby, and Wellington bellowed, "Now, Maitland! Now's your time!"



■ A grenadier of the Old Guard stands proudly in uniform. These elite troops had never known defeat prior to Waterloo



■ Napoleon addresses the assembled Old Guard prior to its fateful assault against Wellington at the Battle of Waterloo

“REPEATED VOLLEYS SLASHED INTO THE FRENCH, LEAVING THE DEAD AND WOUNDED LYING IN HEAPS, BUT RETURNED FIRE KILLED OR WOUNDED 150 SOLDIERS OF THE 52ND FOOT”



■ Prussian soldiers duel members of Napoleon's Old Guard at point blank range during the battle for Plancenoit

DEADLY AND DECISIVE

The Old Guard was only 36.5 metres away when the order rang out, “Stand up, Guards! Make ready! Fire!” The volley shredded the French front rank. With fixed bayonets, the British Guards charged into the reeling Old Guard just as a withering volley from 30th and 73rd Foot ripped into the enemy line again. While a hand-to-hand melee developed, the 4th Chasseurs of the Old Guard came up to steady its retreating comrades. Together these battalions fired a volley at the pursuers, sending the British back across the crest of Mont-Saint-Jean.

On their left flank, the 3rd Chasseurs took harassing fire from a line of skirmishers and

paused to drive them off. In moments, the 52nd Regiment of Foot, led by Colonel John Colborne, stepped into the skirmishers' positions and seized an opportunity. Colborne ordered the 52nd to march to the right, down the slope of the ridge. A quick command to wheel left allowed a 457-metre line of British rifles to outflank the Old Guard. Repeated volleys slashed into the French, leaving the dead and wounded lying in heaps, but return fire killed or wounded 150 soldiers of the 52nd Foot. Then, with a shout, the 52nd charged.

The Old Guard staggered, broke and fled. An electrifying cry rippled through the French onlookers who had never seen the elite formation facing defeat. “The Guard is retreating! Every man for himself!” While his

warhorse, Copenhagen, pawed the ground, Wellington waved his hat in the air to signal a general advance. Three or four battalions of the Old Guard rallied near La Haye Sainte but they were unfortunately decimated in a renewed attack from British and Hanoverian troops. Lore surrounding the battle suggests that some of the Frenchmen were offered the opportunity to capitulate but their response was swift. “The Old Guard dies but never surrenders!”

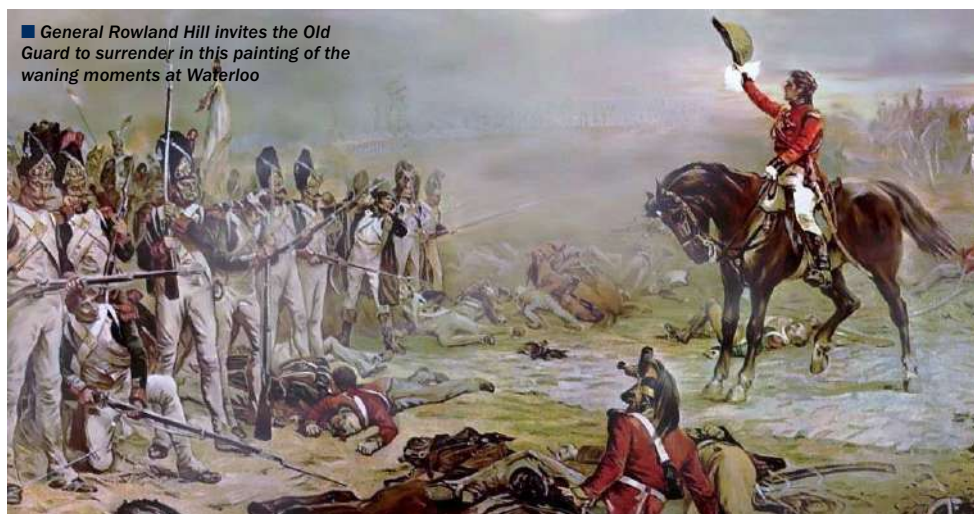
BEYOND PLANCENOIT

Simultaneous with Wellington's repulse of the Old Guard, the Prussians outflanked Plancenoit with the capture of the Chantelet Wood. The defenders, the detached Old Guard troops, fell back in good order until they encountered the pell-mell disintegration of the French centre and were caught up in the rout. Pockets of resistance were eliminated and the Young Guard sustained 96 per cent casualties.

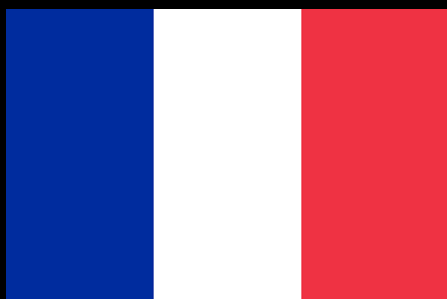
Napoleon was aghast but formed his Old Guard reserve battalions into squares on either side of the Brussels road at La Belle Alliance, hoping to rally his fleeing army. It was no use. As darkness closed in, he slowly comprehended the twilight of his renewed bid for power and joined the retirement.

Gneisenau led the Prussian pursuit directly toward La Belle Alliance and beyond until 11pm. He later remembered, “It was there that Napoleon was during the battle; it was thence that he gave his orders, that he flattered himself with the hopes of victory; and it was there that his ruin was decided...”

■ General Rowland Hill invites the Old Guard to surrender in this painting of the waning moments at Waterloo



BATTLE OF WATERLOO STATS



FRENCH ARMY
NUMBERED

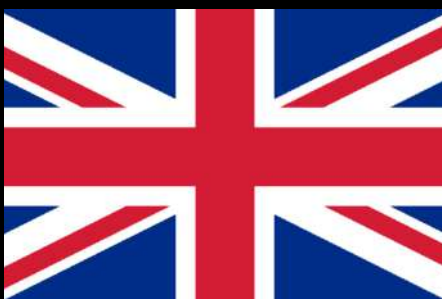
72,000

FRENCH LOSSES
(KILLED OR WOUNDED)

25,000

CAPTURED

8,000–9,000



ALLIED ARMY
(UNDER WELLINGTON)

68,000

ALLIED LOSSES

KILLED

3,500

MISSING

3,300

WOUNDED

10,000+



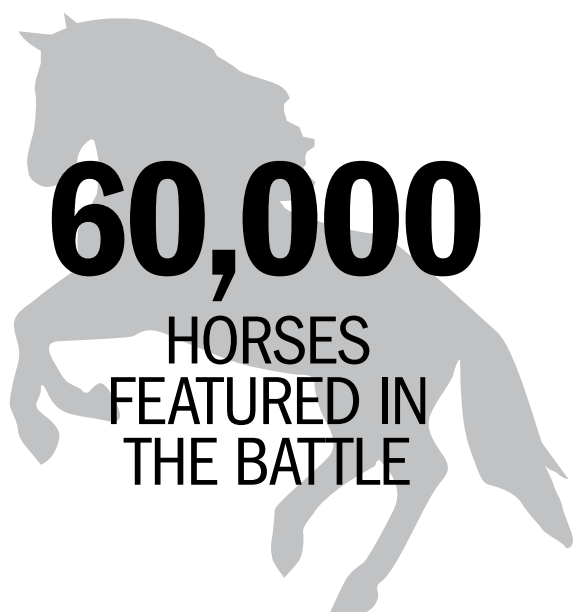
PRUSSIAN ARMY
NUMBERED

50,000

PRUSSIAN LOSSES
(KILLED OR WOUNDED)

7,000

33,000



60,000

HORSES
FEATURED IN
THE BATTLE



APPROX.

400

CANNONS USED
(250 FRENCH, 150 ALLIED)

42,000

TOTAL NUMBER OF CANNONBALLS
FIRED DURING THE BATTLE

2-3 MILES
LENGTH OF ALLIED FRONT

2.5
SQUARE
MILES
SIZE OF
BATTLEFIELD

185.4
MILES
DISTANCE FROM
PARIS TO WATERLOO



1 PINT OF WINE OR 1/3
PINT OF RUM OR GIN,
1LB OF BEEF AND 1.5LB
OF BREAD – A BRITISH
SOLDIER'S DAILY RATIONS



MINIMUM HEIGHT
REQUIRED TO JOIN
NAPOLÉON'S FAMOUS
OLD GUARD

NUMBER OF TROOPS **NAPOLÉON**
SENT TO PURSUE THE **PRUSSIAN**
ARMY THE DAY BEFORE WATERLOO

£20 **ANNUAL WAGE FOR**
A BRITISH SOLDIER



NUMBER OF **VICTORIES**
NAPOLÉON ACHIEVED
PRIOR TO WATERLOO,
WHICH WAS HIS 8TH AND
FINAL DEFEAT

39 NUMBER OF VICTORIES SECURED BY
WELLINGTON PRIOR TO WATERLOO

46 AGE OF NAPOLÉON AT
THE TIME OF THE BATTLE

44
AGE OF THE
OLDEST
SOLDIERS
INVOLVED

17
AGE OF
WALTER FORBES, THE
YOUNGEST SOLDIER TO
FIGHT IN THE BATTLE



The British were reported to have been far more respectful in celebrating their victory in Paris than the Prussians and Russians

AN EMPEROR'S END

NAPOLEON WAS THE MAN WHO HAD ALMOST CLAIMED THE WORLD BUT AT WATERLOO HE WOULD FACE SOMETHING UNEXPECTED – DEFEAT

It is 18 June 1815, 7pm and 4.8 kilometres south of the town of Waterloo. A French force led by Napoleon faces an allied army led by the British duke of Wellington. The battle is on a knife edge – a single move by either the French or British forces could prove fatal and Wellington is exhausted. His forces have held out against hours of battery. Heavy casualties litter the field and a wave of desertions have left his centre weak and exposed, ripe for the picking of a French commander who has something to prove.

Napoleon, for all his military genius and careful planning, is at heart a risk taker. This risk taking attitude has won him the most powerful seat in the world, but it has also cost him everything. He knows the power of a risk, what it can give – and what it can take, and on the fields of Waterloo, he takes another. 6,000 French soldiers, his undefeated

and legendary Imperial Guard, thunder towards Wellington's men on the ridge. His own forces depleted, this is the emperor's last hope. Some would call it madness. He revels in it. Although pummelled by fire from the British at Hougoumont, the French Imperial Guard breaks through the allied line and crashes into Wellington's men.

The English, however, have been waiting, watching and preparing. Muskets loaded and swords drawn, they lay in wait in the long grass. As Napoleon's men break through their lines they let out a volley of shots that tear through the French soldiers at point-blank range. Some 300 men fall from the first volley alone.

As the French prepare to return the attack, the 900 strong brigade of the 52nd Light Infantry emerge through the smoke and fire. The effect is devastation. Though a sharp return fire by the French kills or wounds 150

Fleeing Bonapartists created the Vine and Olive Colony in Alabama but it had collapsed by 1825

“ALL AROUND HIM MEN ARE FALLING OVER THEMSELVES, CRAWLING UNDER CARRIAGES IN A MAD PANIC TO ESCAPE THE PURSUING PRUSSAINS”

men, the resulting charge by the British prompts something unprecedented – the Imperial Guard turn and retreat.

The effect upon the French forces is instantaneous. This undefeatable force, the great and mighty Imperial Guard are retreating. This can mean only one thing – the battle is lost. Cries of “The guard are retreating!” can be heard yelled across the field. Prussian cavalrymen appear on Wellington's eastern flank, flooding the battlefield and decimating any hope of a

turnabout. Disorder and mayhem reign supreme. 2,200 of the legendary Imperial Guard are dead or wounded, and the allies, mad with exhaustion and exhilaration rush across the field in pursuit. Wellington can be seen waving his hat three times to signal a general advance and all hell breaks loose.

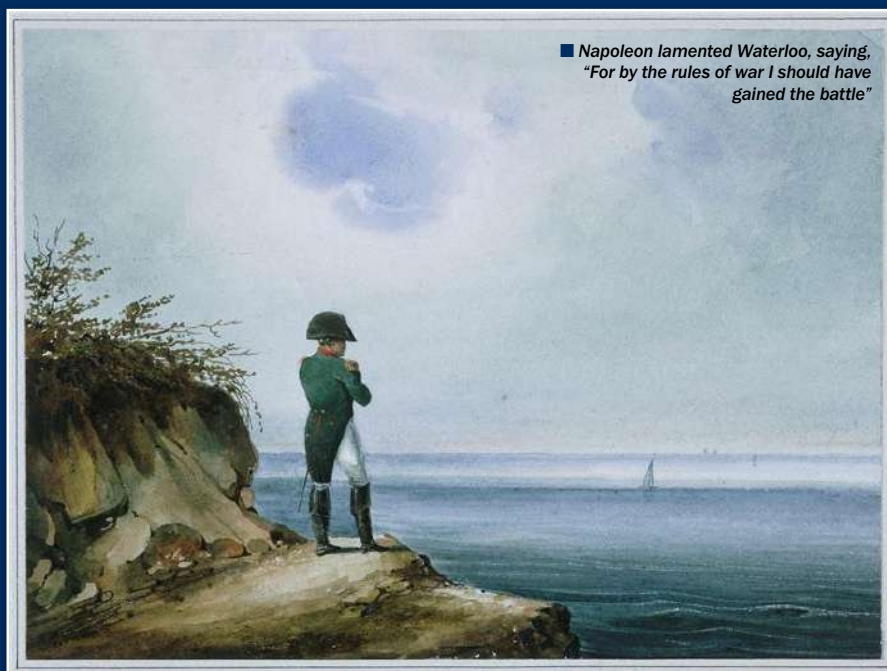
Through the chaos, screaming and rising smoke Wellington glimpses the French emperor, as ever, in the heart of the battle, pale, shaken and numb in the midst of his loss. Wellington has a chance, one order and one shot and the great emperor would be dead. But the duke commands his men to hold fire and Napoleon disappears out of sight, shielded by his men, still hopelessly loyal even in defeat.

In other areas of the field, the battle continues. Three reserve battalions of the Imperial Guard rally together near La Haye Sainte for a last stand but a charge from a united allied force crashes into them and causes mass confusion. They too are forced to retreat. As they are chased, some of the guards are invited to surrender. They are said to have cried, "The Guard dies, it does not surrender!"

The emperor, if he had heard it, may have been proud. But Napoleon is still trying to rally his troops. All around him men are falling over themselves, crawling under carriages in a mad panic to escape the pursuing Prussians, terrified of their fate should their enemies capture them. Realising that his men are no longer listening, Napoleon finally gives up the fight. He mounts his horse and rides off into the approaching night. Waterloo may have been lost but that doesn't mean he's lost Paris. Yet.

THE AFTERMATH

The final moments of the Battle of Waterloo are well documented but, as with most victories, the aftermath is often forgotten. As Napoleon rode off to Paris and Wellington breathed a sigh of relief, back on the fields the devastation was just beginning to be realised. The bodies of the dead were heaped upon the mud, the groans of the injured and dying uniting in a terrible chorus.



■ Napoleon lamented Waterloo, saying, "For by the rules of war I should have gained the battle"

NAPOLEON ON WATERLOO

The little emperor had a lot of time to think about his defeat at Waterloo during his exile on Saint Helena. Luckily for historians today, we have a record of his thoughts regarding what would become his most infamous loss. While he was still en route to the island, he lamented, "Ah! If it were only to be done over again!" It seemed Napoleon was actually surprised he lost. The count de Las Cases visited him in December 1815 and commented that "never of any of his battles presented less doubt in his mind, and he was still at a loss to account for what had happened."

Although the lamentations continued, over time Napoleon blamed other reasons for the loss, claiming that if it wasn't for "the imbecility of Grouchy, I should have gained the day". He

blamed many of his generals for the defeat but Napoleon wasn't without self-blame. He acknowledged his cavalry charge may have been too soon and that maybe he should have ordered a retreat after the Prussians showed their superiority at Ligny, or even waited another month before starting the campaign entirely.

Most consistently, however, he gave no credit at all to Wellington for the victory, saying the outcome should not reflect "any credit on Lord Wellington as a general" and went on to list all his mistakes. Although he commended the bravery of the English, he said the victory was more Blücher's than Wellington's. By November 1816, he was finally more at peace with his loss. He settled on it being his destiny to lose that day, and nothing could have changed it.



■ Napoleon retreats from the Waterloo battlefield

“THE POLITICIANS IN PARIS WERE VERY AWARE THAT THE ALLIED ASSAULT WOULD NOT STOP UNTIL NAPOLEON – AND NOT FRANCE – SURRENDERED”

Men died of infection, blood loss and even hunger on the field as the allies took all of their surgeons and wagons with them. Approximately 50,000 men and 7,000 horses lay dead and wounded and they attracted scavengers. The bodies of the dead or dying were looted – especially for their teeth, which were used to make dental replacements.

Not even Emperor Napoleon himself was able to escape the looting as his hastily abandoned carriage was soon discovered. Within it, an annotated copy of Machiavelli's *The Prince* was found, along with a collection of diamonds that later became part of the king of Prussia's prized crown jewels.

In total there were approximately 23,000 casualties for the allies, and almost 25,000 on the French side. The previously idyllic, pastoral fields were scorched and covered with wreckage, and the farm houses and other structures damaged greatly by the battle – with some still bearing the scars today.

The allies may have won the battle but they still had some work to do. Wellington sent his official dispatch to London on 19 June 1815, describing the battle and win in detail. It was published in the *London Gazette* on 22 June, and the victory would soon become one of the most iconic in British history. Meanwhile, Wellington, von Blücher and other members of the Coalition began their last hurrah – the advance towards Paris and the main aim of getting Napoleon off the European continent for good.

NAPOLEON'S ESCAPE

The news of Napoleon's defeat arrived in his capital city before the man himself by two hours. It was not unusual for Napoleon to manipulate the truth and he had lied about victories before but there he would have no such luck now. The news of his great defeat was swarming the streets and there was a rapid change of mood. Since Napoleon's valiant return from exile, the people had been gripped by a sense of enthrallment and excitement, but upon the news of the defeat they had to face a harsh reality. Armies were advancing into France and would soon be knocking on the gates of Paris. Napoleon had lost. His reign was over.

Napoleon, however, was not so eager to accept this truth. He did not lose. He had been exiled and returned, he had snatched victory from the jaws of defeat countless times – there was no reason he couldn't do it again. He tried all he could to rally his troops and dive back into the fray. His people however, and particularly the French government, did not share his sentiment.

The politicians in Paris were very aware that the allied assault would not stop until Napoleon personally, and not France, surrendered. A day later, after countless discussions and arguments, the emperor finally realised that everyone had turned against him and abdicated in favour of his son. This appointment was something even he was probably aware would not last, as the allies intended to restore Louis XVIII to the French throne.



■ Denis Dighton's depiction of the British Hussars of Vivienne's Brigade, painted in 1816



■ *The British Squares receiving the charge of the French cuirassiers at the Battle of Waterloo*



Napoleon was in a difficult situation. He had lost his power in France and Prussian troops had been ordered to capture him dead or alive. The last thing he wanted to do was end up in Prussian hands, so he hatched a plan to escape to the United States.

Many exiles from revolutionary and imperial France had already fled there and it seemed a preferable option to execution. The French government agreed and put plans in place to have the emperor board a vessel at Rochefort. Unfortunately for Napoleon, the English had considered this plan as well and blockaded the French port, making escape impossible.

THE EMPEROR'S SURRENDER

Faced with the brutality of Prussian soldiers out for his head and Frenchmen who were rallying against him, Napoleon decided to seek

asylum from an unlikely friend – the British. The emperor's brother had spent some time in England as a prisoner of war and he was aware their codes of conduct would make an execution, which the Prussians wanted, unlikely.

So Napoleon put pen to paper and wrote a letter to the prince regent asking for his mercy. The letter pleaded for the "hospitality of the British people" and praised the prince's generosity. The prince was impressed by the letter, claiming it was better than any he had received from Louis XVIII. Arrangements were put in place and Napoleon boarded HMS Bellerophon on 15 July, one month after his defeat at Waterloo.

By this point, the French Army had been disbanded and the allies, having entered Paris on 7 July, had already installed Louis XVIII to the throne. Napoleon, for all his genius and achievement, was now a memento of an old regime, and did not fit in the new world Britain and its allies were trying to forge.

Execution was discussed and there were good arguments for it – Napoleon had returned from exile before and he had an irritating habit of turning any situation to his favour. But there was also the issue of making the man a martyr and, bizarrely, the British people were fascinated and intrigued by him.

Killing him likely would not have gone down well. It would be better, the allies decided, to spirit him away to some far flung part of the world where he could no longer involve himself in the events of Europe. An old man on an island would be far less powerful than a hero who had died for his country.

Without ever setting foot in England, Napoleon boarded the Northumberland on course for Saint Helena, a remote volcanic island. For the British and their allies, it would at last be the end of Napoleon's meddling in Europe. However, for the emperor, Saint Helena would be his home for the next five years – and a bitter, lonely end to an ambitious and remarkable life.



■ The Peterloo Massacre in 1819 was named after Waterloo, and the demonstrations were a result of the economic hardship it caused

THE SPOILS OF WAR

AFTER ALMOST 25 YEARS OF WAR WITH NAPOLEON, HAD THE ALLIED NATIONS ACTUALLY GAINED ANYTHING?



■ Dentures made from human teeth mounted on ivory were known as 'Waterloo teeth' well into the 19th century

Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo left more than 20,000 British, Prussian, Dutch and Hanoverian soldiers dead on the battlefield. The French casualties were never counted but may have exceeded 24,000. The allied armies seized hundreds of French canons and wagons of ammunition. The Prussians also took Napoleon's private carriage with all his personal effects, as well as a large quantity of diamonds and a small fortune in cash. Local peasants – but also scavengers who travelled to the battlefield from abroad – pulled the teeth from the corpses and sold them to dentists to make into dentures for the wealthy. Meanwhile, the Allied army had occupied Paris and swiftly removed many of the Louvre's art treasures that Napoleon had looted from the Pope. The Prince Regent paid to have them transported back to Rome.

DIVIDING THE CAKE

With Napoleon exiled again, this time to the remote island of St Helena, the allies were no longer at war with the French. But stability in Europe depended on securing France's borders and redrawing national boundaries to prevent any one empire from having too much power. The Congress of Vienna had been negotiating the details of this since Napoleon's first abdication in 1814. The final terms were actually already agreed by the major European powers (Austria, Britain, Prussia and Russia) nine days before the Battle of Waterloo. France lost some land along its eastern border, and Britain was given a few colonial territories, including the South African Cape, Mauritius, Ceylon and Trinidad and Tobago. But the biggest changes occurred in Central Europe. Prussia gained the left bank

“AS THE ECONOMY WORSENERD, PAPER CURRENCY BECAME DEVALUED, AND GOLD BULLION BEGAN TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY”

of the Rhine and 60 per cent of Saxony, and Austria received northern Italy. Russia grabbed a large slice of Poland and was allowed to keep Finland. Germany was left as separate kingdoms of Bavaria, Württemberg and Saxony. The effect of all this horse trading was to create a power balance that would prevent another all-out war in Europe for a century. But it did so at the expense of the liberal and egalitarian ideals that Napoleon had favoured. The Bourbon kings were restored in France, Spain and Naples, and revolutionary stirrings were quickly quashed.

ECONOMIC RUIN

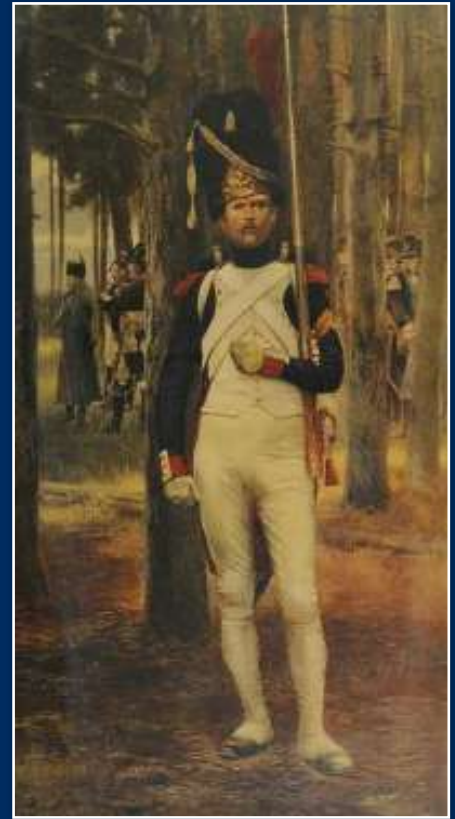
For Britain, which had spent £600 million fighting Napoleon, the end of the war brought financial crisis. The price of grain plummeted now that the government wasn't buying it to feed the troops. Farms that had been profitable even on poor soil during the war, were now unsustainable, and the value of farming stock fell by 50 per cent. Landowners and tenant farmers alike were caught in a spiral of debt as the banks foreclosed. Britain downsized its army by 300,000 men, without a pension. As the economy worsened, paper currency became devalued, and gold bullion began to leave the country. Foreign money lenders stepped in to prop up credit. The Rothschilds' financial empire was born in the ashes of Waterloo, and came to dominate the lending markets across the whole of Europe.

Britain fought Napoleon partly to make sure that The Terror of the French Revolution would not spread across Europe. But the dire economic conditions that followed Waterloo put Britain at the brink of revolution several times.

THE ORIGIN OF THE BEARSKIN

At Waterloo, the British 1st Foot Guards were commanded by Major General Maitland. Positioned behind the ridge of Mont-Saint-Jean, they were protected from canon fire, so Napoleon sent his Imperial Guards against them. These elite troops had famously never been defeated in battle (partly because they were normally kept in reserve). As they crested the ridge, 1,400 British Guards stood up and fired a devastating volley of musket fire, which caused the French imperial Guards to retreat and sowed panic among the French forces.

When news of Wellington's victory reached England, the Prince Regent was told that the 1st Foot Guards had faced the French grenadiers. In honour of that, their regiment was renamed the Grenadier Guards, and they adopted the bearskin hat worn by the French. This is still part of the ceremonial uniform of the Grenadier Guards today, even though the Prince Regent was misinformed. The guards had actually routed the Chasseurs regiment of French Guards. The British Household Cavalry also borrowed from the French uniform after Waterloo. Their polished steel breastplates were inspired by the armour worn by the French Cuirassiers.



■ The Grenadiers of the French Old Guard wore the bearskin hat to make them look taller and more imposing



■ Diplomats at the Congress of Vienna. In reality the participants never all met at the same time. Negotiations were conducted in small groups

Downfall

124 NAPOLEON IN EXILE

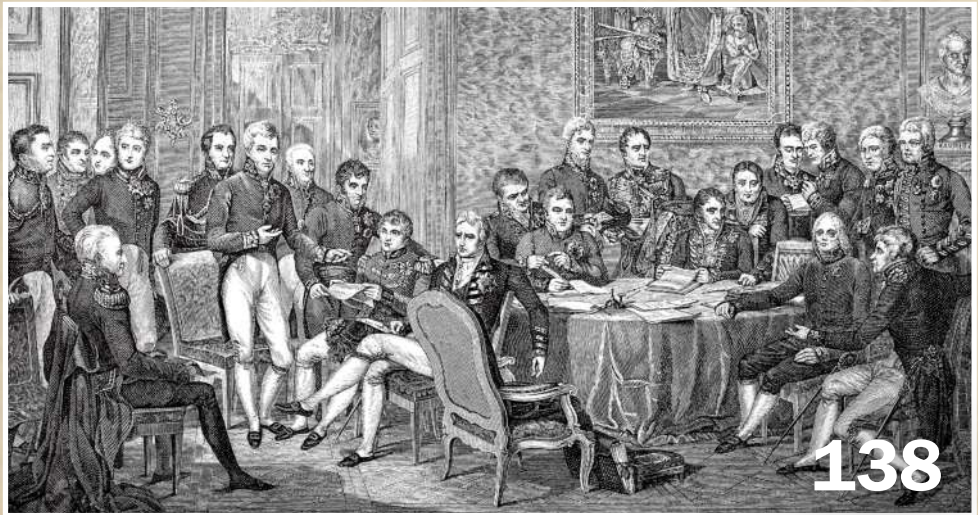
Having escaped exile once before, could Napoleon do it again?

134 WHAT IF... NAPOLEON HAD WON THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO?

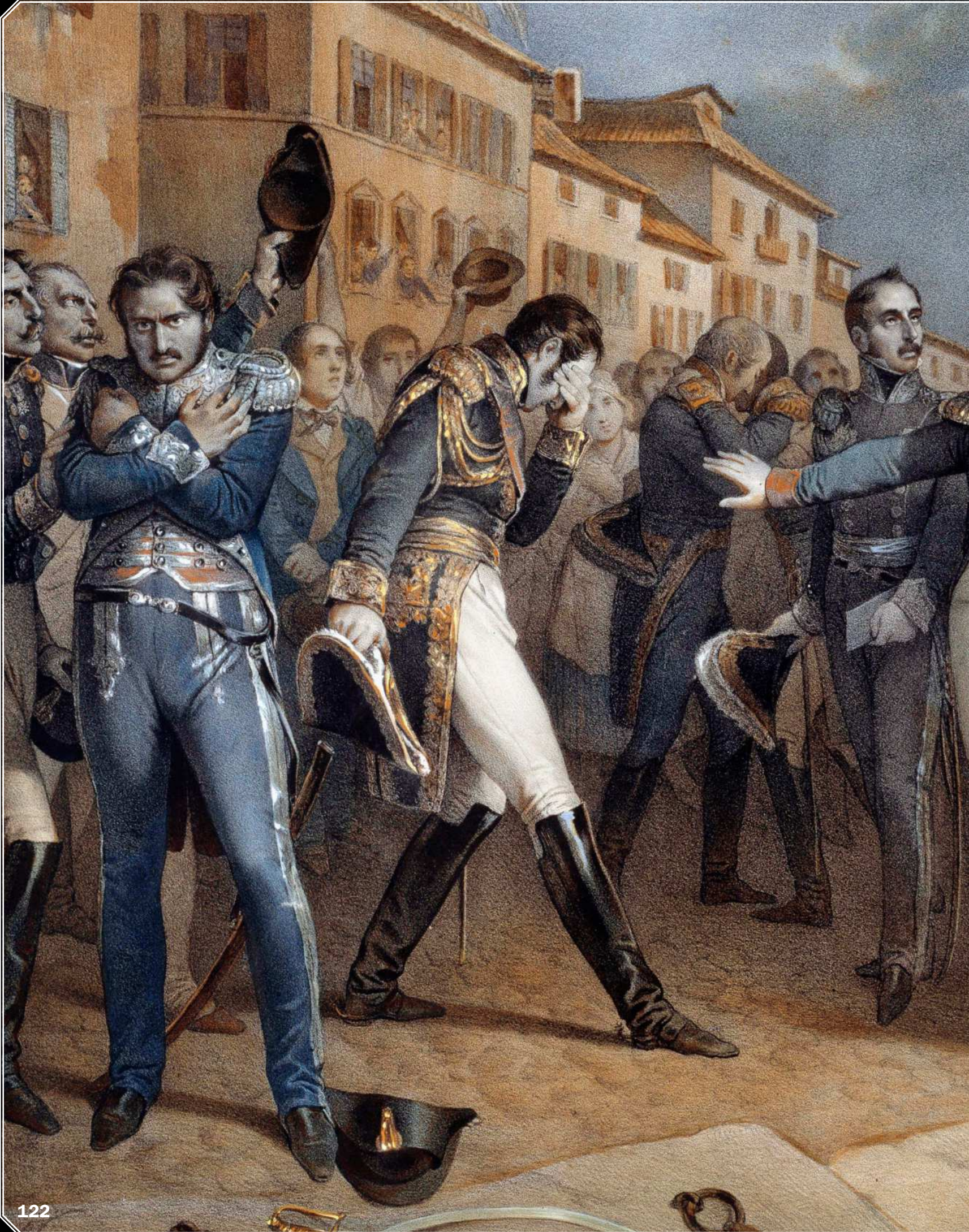
Would a French victory have changed the course of history?

138 WATERLOO: THE HINGE OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Napoleon's defeat ushered in a great era of peace in Europe









On 14 July 1815, the once mighty Napoleon Bonaparte submitted to British law and surrendered in the wake of his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo. The man who at the height of his success stood as the emperor of the French boarded the ship Bellerophon, which would transport him to the island of St Helena, where he would remain in exile until his death in 1821.

NAPOLÉON IN EXILE

HAVING ESCAPED FROM EXILE ONCE ALREADY, COULD NAPOLEON HAVE DONE IT AGAIN FROM THE UNFORGIVING ISLAND OF ST HELENA?

Napoleon Bonaparte spent the last six years of his life as a British prisoner on the remote South Atlantic island of St Helena. Though the island's sheer isolation and forbidding terrain posed daunting challenges to anyone hoping to rescue the former French Emperor, rumours of escape plots abounded. The British government took these seriously and went to enormous lengths to prevent Napoleon's liberation. But did he even want to escape?

Following his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815, Napoleon abdicated the French throne and gave himself up to Britain, hoping that the Prince Regent (future King George IV) would grant him asylum. Instead, Britain – acting on behalf of the European powers allied against Napoleon – transported him to St Helena. A rock 1,900 kilometres west of Africa and 3,200 kilometres east of Brazil seemed an ideal place to stash a public menace, especially one who had escaped from the considerably less remote island of Elba a few months earlier.

Jailbreak would not be easy. St Helena is essentially the top of an extinct volcano. There are few accessible landing places among its steep cliffs and the interior is crisscrossed with peaks and ravines. A British surgeon who arrived with one of the regiments to guard Napoleon described the island as “the ugliest and most dismal rock conceivable, of rugged and abrupt surface, rising like an enormous black wart from the face of the deep.” In addition to the natural barriers, there were plenty of man-made ones. St Helena had been in the possession of the East India Company since the mid-17th century. It was already defended as an important port of call for vessels plying the route between Europe and Asia. The landing places were well-fortified and protected by powerful gun batteries. Forts overlooked Jamestown, the island's main settlement and port.

When the ship carrying Napoleon to St Helena dropped anchor off Jamestown in October 1815, “every platform, every aperture, the brow of every hill, was planted with a cannon.” Napoleon came on deck and observed through his spyglass the rocky heights bristling with guns. He returned to his cabin without comment.

Security was beefed up considerably during Napoleon's captivity. More cannons were added, resulting in some 500 pieces of artillery, manned day and night. Additional regiments were sent from Britain, bringing the garrison to 2,800 troops, an enormous number for an island of only 120 square kilometres and a civilian population of around 6,000. Over 500 men were stationed on Deadwood Plain alone, in full view of Napoleon's residence of Longwood House.

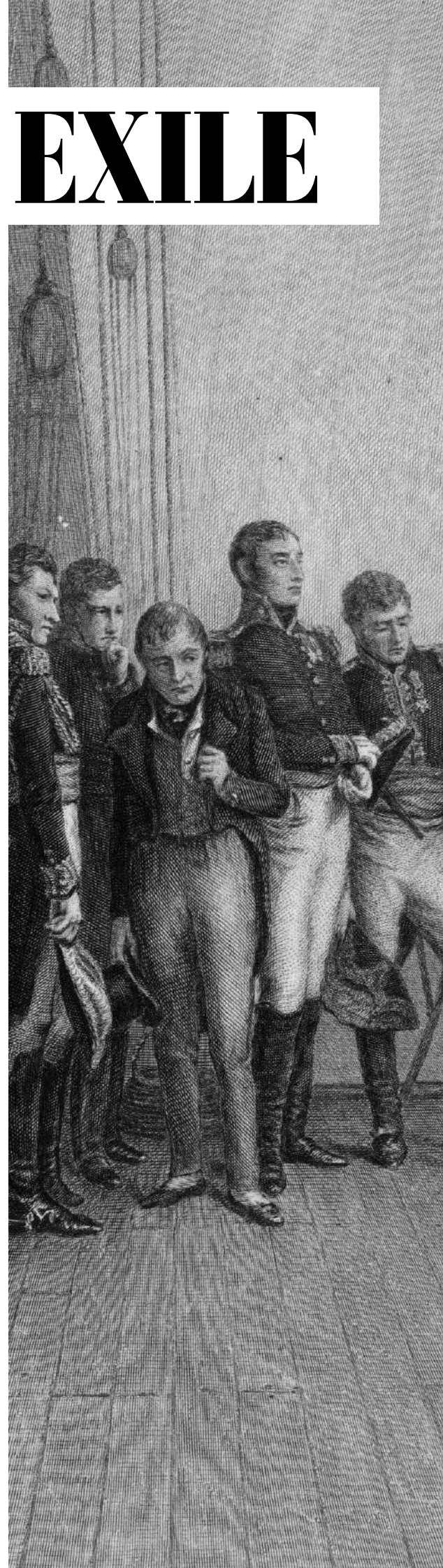
Longwood was eight kilometres from Jamestown. It was guarded at two perimeters. The inner zone, within which Napoleon could walk and ride without restriction, stretched for a six-kilometre radius from the house. It was enclosed by a dry stone wall, with a sentry at every 50 paces. At night, during which no one was allowed to enter or leave Longwood, the sentries stood immediately outside the house at 15-pace intervals, with muskets loaded and bayonets fixed. The outer perimeter, which extended for about 19 kilometres, was defended by sentry posts and mounted guards. If Napoleon wanted to move beyond this area, he had to give prior notice and be accompanied by a British officer.

A British captain resided permanently at Longwood. He had to report to Governor Hudson Lowe twice a day with confirmation that he had seen Napoleon. No one was allowed to communicate with Napoleon or his companions without prior authorisation. Any letters going to or from Longwood House had to first be read by the governor or his London boss, Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies.

The British placed lookout towers on all the major heights. News of suspicious activity could be relayed across the island using semaphore flags. The roads were watched, and there was a curfew on movement outside Jamestown after sunset.

St Helena's coast and the surrounding waters were defended by a naval squadron consisting of three frigates, two men-of-war and six brigs. The latter constantly cruised around the island. From the lookout towers, ships could be seen as far as 90 kilometres away. Any vessel approaching St Helena was accompanied until it was either given permission to anchor or was sent away. No

“A BRITISH CAPTAIN RESIDED PERMANENTLY AT LONGWOOD. HE HAD TO REPORT TO GOVERNOR HUDSON LOWE TWICE A DAY WITH CONFIRMATION THAT HE HAD SEEN NAPOLEON”





"THE BRITISH PLACED LOOKOUT TOWERS ON ALL THE MAJOR HEIGHTS"



boats were allowed to arrive or leave between sunset and sunrise.

Detailing the extensive security arrangements in a letter to a friend, the Marquis de Montchenu, France's commissioner to the island, wrote "escape seems to be materially out of the question."

Was it, though? This elaborate British cordon had holes. Napoleon and his entourage were able to bribe captains of merchant vessels, and even British officers, to carry letters off the island. European visitors smuggled in messages and gifts for Napoleon. There are several examples of people entering Longwood House without permission. In January 1816, Napoleon escaped from his escort while out riding. He headed to Powell's Valley, an area less than two kilometres from the ocean, where there were no guards posted – an omission that was soon fixed.

Napoleon hated the restrictions on his freedom. He detested Hudson Lowe and did everything he could to make the governor's job harder. He spent long periods inside Longwood, observing his captors. He threatened to shoot anyone who invaded his privacy. The captain who was supposed to be reporting on his whereabouts had to try to spot Napoleon from a distance, or rely on reports from members of Napoleon's household that he was still there. It wasn't long before details of escape plots fell into the governor's hands. One intercepted letter, postmarked March 1816, referred to a boat that would "drift to the back of the island... in the shape of an old cask, but so constructed that by pulling at both ends to be sea worthy, and both boat and sail which will be found inside will be painted to correspond with the colour of the sea." Napoleon was expected to slide down a cliff on a rope to

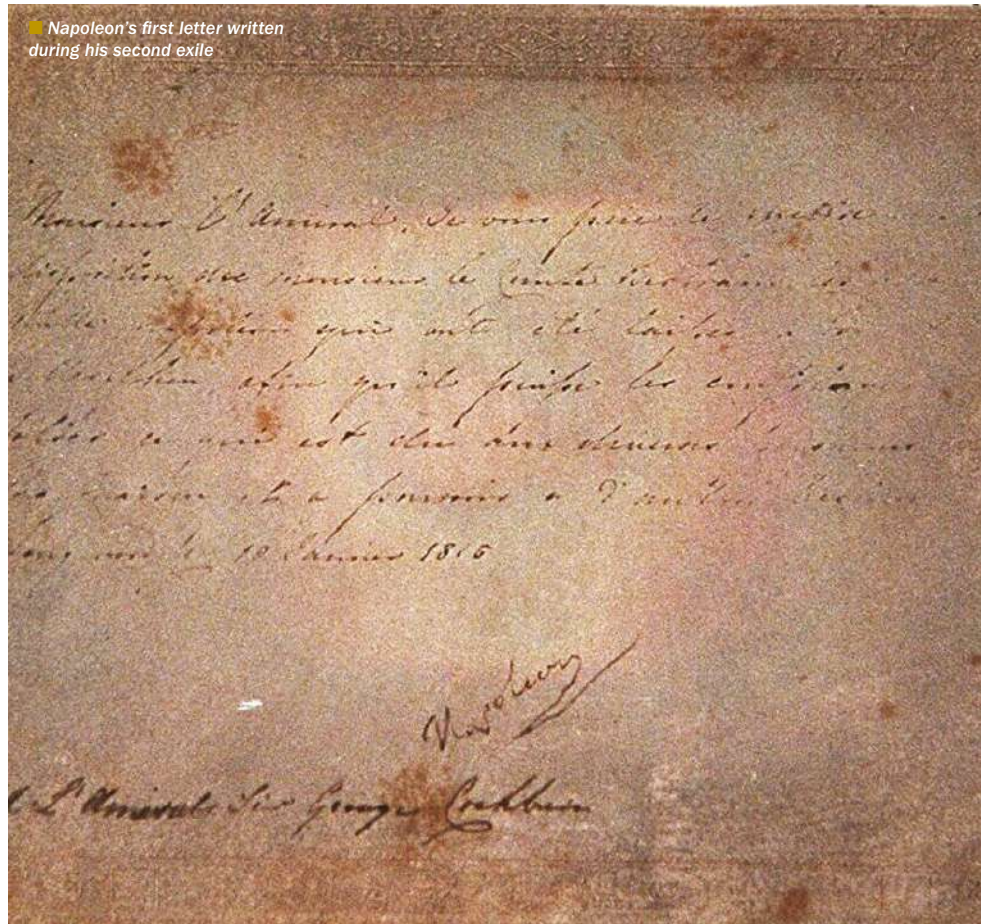
reach this vessel, the ultimate destination being the United States.

In July 1816, Lowe received a dispatch from Lord Bathurst warning him about a plan by the crew of a privateer, called the True Blooded Yankee, to sail from Brazil. These "buccaneers of the most enterprising and desperate character... talked of fitting out a schooner or two and it was believed they meant to send one to Tristan da Cunha and keep one cruising at a certain distance from St Helena as a point to which Napoleon might steer if he could be apprised of their intentions and could contrive to push off in a boat." Bathurst subsequently ordered Lowe to send a small force to occupy Tristan da Cunha, an island 1,900 kilometres south of St Helena, so that it could not be used as a base for a rescue attempt. The British had already occupied Ascension Island for the same reason.

■ Napoleon on the beach at St Helena, as painted by Oscar Rex



■ Napoleon's first letter written during his second exile



The following year, a former member of Napoleon's imperial guard named Nicholas Raoul told French diplomats in Philadelphia that he had been entrusted by Napoleon's brother Joseph – then living in the city – with organising a plan to rescue Napoleon. This involved the recruitment of men and officers in the US, where there were many Bonapartist exiles, as well as the procurement and armament of two schooners: one at Baltimore and the other at Annapolis. A third schooner would leave Philadelphia for St Helena, "with the object of observing the position of the English cruisers and the strength of the English forces, and turning back to meet the expedition with a report of it."

According to Raoul, a French colonel had already gone with 32 officers to Pernambuco, in northeast Brazil, to prepare a staging base on the island of Fernando de Noronha, 350



■ Pacing his study, Napoleon dictates his memoirs to General Gourgaud, as painted by Charles Auguste Steuben

“ESCAPE RUMOURS WERE PROBABLY SPREAD BY NAPOLEON’S SUPPORTERS WITH THE AIM OF SCARING EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS”

kilometres off the Brazilian coast. Here, the American schooners, with some 80 officers and 700 men, would be joined by a 74-gun ship commanded by renegade British admiral Lord Thomas Cochrane, carrying 800 men and 200 to 300 officers. This force would sail for St Helena and destroy the ships defending the island. It would then attack at three points: Jamestown in the north, Sandy Bay in the south, and Prosperous Bay near Longwood. The first landing would divert the English troops. The second would capture the island’s fortifications. The third would retrieve Napoleon and put him on a ship to the United States. Further investigation contradicted many of Raoul’s claims. In November 1817, one of the Frenchmen at Pernambuco confessed to a different version of the plot: “It was intended to fit out one or more fast sailing vessels... sufficiently capacious to contain several small steamboats. These vessels after making

the island of St Helena, were to keep at a considerable distance from it.... The steam boats were then to be prepared, and as they were to be sent at night and manned by persons determined to brave every danger, it was hoped that some one of them might be fortunate enough to succeed in setting their late Emperor at liberty.” After informing the Foreign Office, local British and French officials kept a close watch on Napoleonic veterans in the Americas. Many escape rumours were probably spread by Napoleon’s supporters with the aim of scaring European governments and keeping their own hopes up. After news of yet another conspiracy reached London in November 1818, a newspaper commented, “It is inconceivable how much this man, the scourge of the world, still excites public attention.” Still, the British and French governments took rescue plans seriously, particularly in

light of what was happening in Europe. In September 1820, Bathurst sent Lowe his starkest warning yet: “The reports which you have recently made of the conduct of General Bonaparte and of his followers make me suspect that he is beginning to entertain serious thoughts of escaping from St Helena, and the accounts which he will have since received of what is passing in Europe will not fail to encourage this project. The overthrow of the Neapolitan Government, the revolutionary spirit which more or less prevails over all Italy, and the doubtful state of France itself, must excite his attention, and clearly show that a crisis is fast approaching, if not already arrived, when his escape would be productive of important consequences. That his partisans are active cannot be doubted; and if he be ever willing to hazard the attempt, he will never allow such an opportunity to escape. “In what shape and in what manner this attempt will be made, I cannot judge, but I am satisfied this storm will not pass over unnoticed at Longwood. General Bonaparte has money at [his] command; he has partisans in abundance; he has means of

THE COST OF CONTAINING NAPOLEON

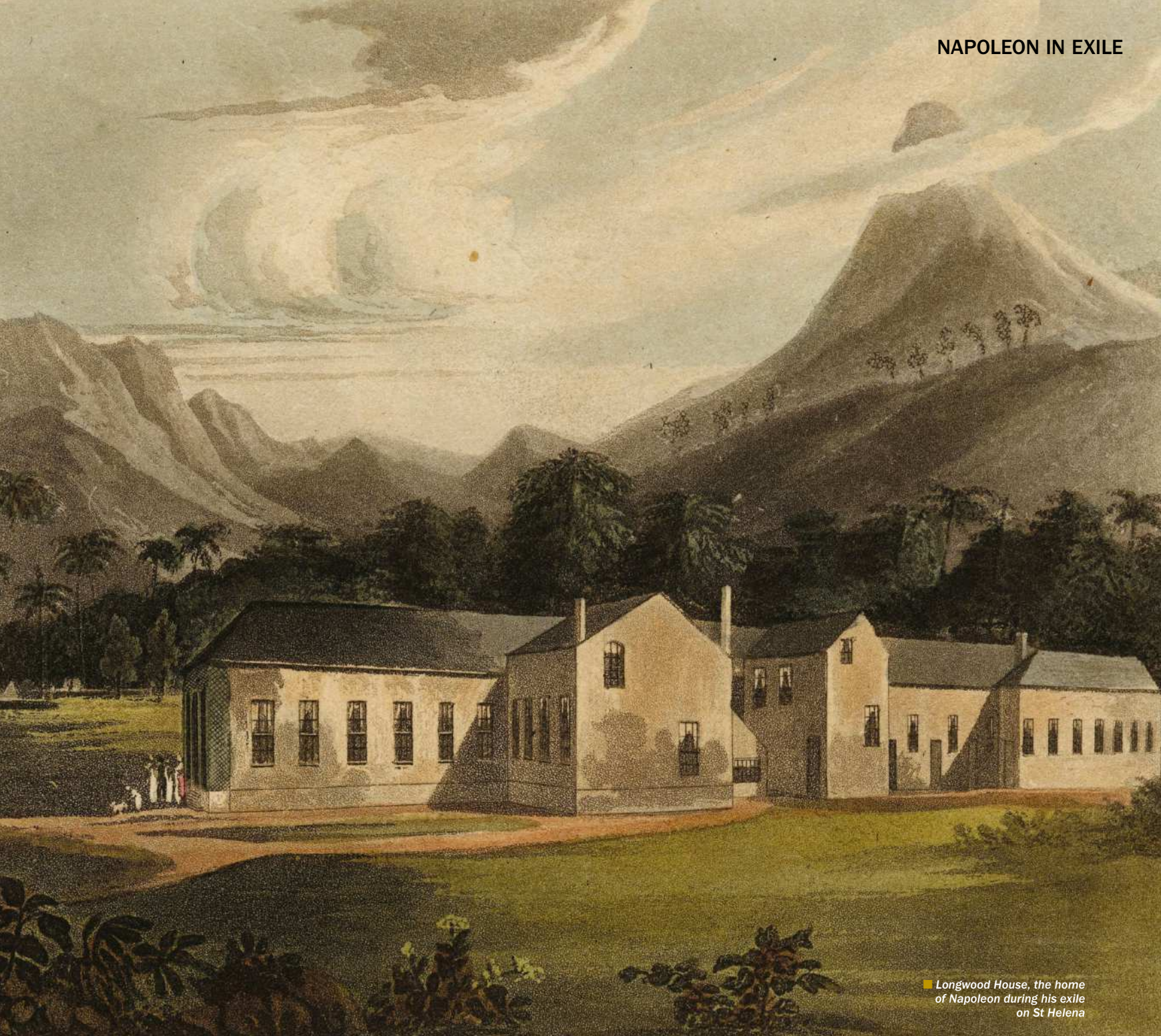
Exile might have been the choice of punishment, but the Emperor and his entourage cost the English much more than they bargained for



■ A letter written by Antonio Buonavita in 1819 concerning the supplies to bring to Napoleon I

Napoleon arrived on St Helena with an entourage of 24 people, including various counts and generals, their wives and children, and servants. All of these people had to be provided for. The British government stipulated that the expenses of Napoleon’s household should not exceed £8,000 per year, which was the allowance for a British general of the highest rank. But it was not long before the annual costs of provisioning Longwood soared to an estimated £20,000. Some of this could be explained by shortages of supplies and some price-gouging, with the influx of people to the island. But it was also due to the extravagant tastes of Napoleon’s companions. Every day the purveyors had to furnish “90 pounds of beef, six chickens, 74lbs bread, 5lbs butter, 2lbs of lard, 9lbs sugar, 1¼lbs coffee, 1lb tea, 9lbs wax candles, 30 eggs, 1lb cheese, 5lbs flour, 7lbs salt meat, 2¾ hundred-weight firewood, three bottles of beer, vegetables, fruit, oil and vinegar, seven bottles of Champagne or Graves, one bottle Madeira, one bottle Constantia, six bottles of ordinary wine, and each servant was also entitled to one bottle of Cape or Canary wine each day.” Every fortnight, the following was provided: “Eight ducks, two turkeys, two geese, two sugar-loaves, half a sack of rice, two hams of up to 14lbs, 45 bushels of coal, 7lbs of butter, salt, mustard, pepper, capers, lamp oil, peas, fish to the value of £4, milk £5.”

The volume of alcohol consumed was particularly shocking to the British and became a matter for discussion in the House of Commons. Excluding children and servants, there were nine adults in Napoleon’s household, plus Napoleon. In one fortnight, they went through 266 bottles of wine (almost two bottles per person per day) plus 42 bottles of porter. Governor Hudson Lowe insisted that Napoleon economise. In protest, Napoleon – who was far from destitute – instructed his staff to sell some of the silver tableware he had brought with him. This had the desired result of making the British look mean. Lowe finally succeeded in persuading Lord Bathurst to raise Napoleon’s allowance to £12,000 per year. The Longwood allowance was relatively small in the scale of expenses associated with keeping Napoleon captive. There was pay and provisions for the additional troops. There was the additional ordnance. There was the governor’s salary (£12,000, which also included the allowance for Lowe’s household). There was also the expense of the naval squadron. In 1816, the estimated annual cost of confining Napoleon on St Helena – including Napoleon’s increased allowance – was £96,032. That is equivalent to roughly £7,884,300 per year today. Multiplying by the five and a half years that Napoleon spent on St Helena brings the total cost of his imprisonment to within the range of £43.4 million.



■ Longwood House, the home of Napoleon during his exile on St Helena

communication which your regulations may occasionally intercept but cannot entirely prevent; the times are most favourable for the attempt; and, without thinking that he habitually courts a hazardous enterprise, I cannot persuade myself that he will shrink from one which, if successful, must now promise such important results."

The plot being concocted at the time was the most fantastical of all: to rescue Napoleon using a submarine. This was not as far-fetched as it sounds. A vessel that could briefly operate underwater had been built as early as the 17th century. During the American War of Independence, an American submarine had tried unsuccessfully to blow up a British ship. In 1800, when Napoleon was First Consul, American inventor Robert Fulton conducted several successful trials of a submarine in

France. After Napoleon withdrew his support, Fulton moved to England where he may have met Irish adventurer Thomas Johnson. When Fulton returned to the US, Johnson claimed to have acquired Fulton's plans and considered himself competent to carry them out. During the War of 1812, the British government commissioned Johnson to build a submarine, which he apparently did. In early 1820, officers were sent to determine whether the vessel was worth the £100,000 Johnson wanted for it. They paid him less than £5,000.

Johnson later claimed to have constructed two steam-powered submarines, the *Eagle* and the smaller *Etna*, for the express purpose of rescuing Napoleon. Equipped with 20 torpedoes, the two vessels would anchor along the coast near Longwood. Submerged during the day, they would surface at night.

"Everything being then perfectly in order, I should then go on shore, provided with some other small articles, such as a ball of strong twine, an iron bolt, with a block, which I would sink into the ground at the top of the rock, opposite Longwood House, and abreast of the submarine ships. I should then obtain my introduction to his Imperial Majesty, and communicate my plan."

Johnson's plan was to disguise himself and Napoleon, and lower Napoleon down the side of a cliff to the *Etna*. He would then "cast off our moorings, and haul alongside the *Eagle*, and... get under way as soon as it became dark. In this position I should propel by steam until I had given the island a good berth, and then ship our masts and make sail, steering for the United States. I calculated that no hostile ship or ships could impede our progress...



■ Hudson Lowe, the Governor of St Helena and Napoleon's loathed gaoler

as in the event of an attack I should haul our sails, and strike yards and masts (which would only occupy about 40 minutes), and then submerge. Under water we should wait the approach of the enemy, and then, by the aid of the little Etna, attaching the torpedo to her bottom, affect her destruction in 15 minutes."

Johnson may have actually launched a submarine in late 1820. The painter Walter Greaves later claimed that his father, who owned a boat yard at Chelsea, said "there was a mysterious boat that was intended to go under water... for the purpose of getting Napoleon off the island of St Helena. So, on one dark night in November, she proceeded down the river. She managed to get below London Bridge. The officers boarding her, Capt Johnson in the meantime threatened to shoot them. But they paid no attention to his threats, seized her and... destroyed her." Johnson himself claimed "the vessels were laid down to be coppered when news arrived of the exile's death" in 1821.

Even if Johnson or another potential rescuer had managed to make it to St Helena, would Napoleon have been willing to risk his life in an escape attempt?

According to Napoleon's companions on St Helena, the exiled Emperor considered several proposed plans, but refused to go through with any of them. Responding to one, Napoleon said he "believed in the success of his plan, but that his resolution not to struggle against his destiny being immovable, he must persist in refusing his offers." More to the point, Napoleon considered it beneath his dignity to disguise himself or hide like a common criminal. After Napoleon's death, Generals Henri Bertrand and Charles Montholon, who were with Napoleon on St Helena, told Lord Holland "he was a man never to attempt

"JOHNSON'S PLAN WAS TO DISGUISE NAPOLEON"

WHERE MIGHT NAPOLEON HAVE GONE?

Napoleon would have had his pick of destinations had he escaped from St Helena



LIVE IN EXILE IN THE UNITED STATES

Hundreds of Napoleon's supporters fled to the United States after Napoleon's 1815 defeat, including Napoleon's older brother Joseph, who settled in Bordentown, New Jersey. Congress granted the French exiles a tract of undeveloped land in Alabama, where they tried unsuccessfully to cultivate olives and vineyards. In 1818, some 150 Bonapartists attempted to form an armed colony called Champ d'Asile (Field of Asylum) in Texas, which was then part of New Spain (Mexico). They were soon chased out by the Spaniards, and many wound up in New Orleans. Champ d'Asile may have been linked with an alleged plot to put Joseph Bonaparte on the throne of an independent Mexico, or with plans to rescue Napoleon from St Helena.

Napoleon seriously considered trying to escape to the United States after the Battle of Waterloo, before deciding to give himself up to the British. When he was on St Helena, Napoleon often speculated on what he might have done in the United States. This ranged from retirement on the banks of the Mississippi or the Ohio River, to travelling across the continent, to founding the core of "a new homeland." He said, "I would have loved to realise this dream. It would have brought me new glory."

BUILD A NEW EMPIRE

South America was a popular destination for Napoleon's armies fighting the Napoleonic Wars. Michel Bugeaud, a French general, proposed a plan to build a new empire in South America. He was a proponent of the independence of the Americas and a rescue plan for Napoleon.

When Napoleon was exiled to St Helena, he was given a billiard table. "We would have rumoured in Buenos Aires that the Americans were included where he was." This was a common rumor at the time, suggesting that Napoleon might have been rescued and taken to South America.



JOIN THE REVOLUTIONS IN EUROPE

Europe was in no mood to welcome Napoleon in the years immediately after the Battle of Waterloo. But in 1820 there were revolutions in Naples, Spain and Portugal, and revolutionary conspiracies in France. Napoleon's supporters were involved in these events. Raoul claimed that the ultimate goal of the Brazil-based rescue plot was to return Napoleon to France. "When Bonaparte reaches the United States, the plan is to take him in a frigate to Cherbourg, there to try his fortune." One of the letters intercepted by Lowe said that after Napoleon secured Spain, "France must surrender, for both soldiers and people long for him and sigh for him. There is not the least doubt...the exalted hero will have greater fleets and armies than ever." The French government feared that Napoleon's return could plunge France into a civil war. In November 1820, rumours that Napoleon actually had escaped produced a half-percent fall in French stock. After Napoleon died, Lord Bathurst admitted that as long as Napoleon lived, "the large body of the discontented in France (and indeed elsewhere) had a rallying point to look to, and there could be no doubt that his escape would at any time have been followed by a fearful result."

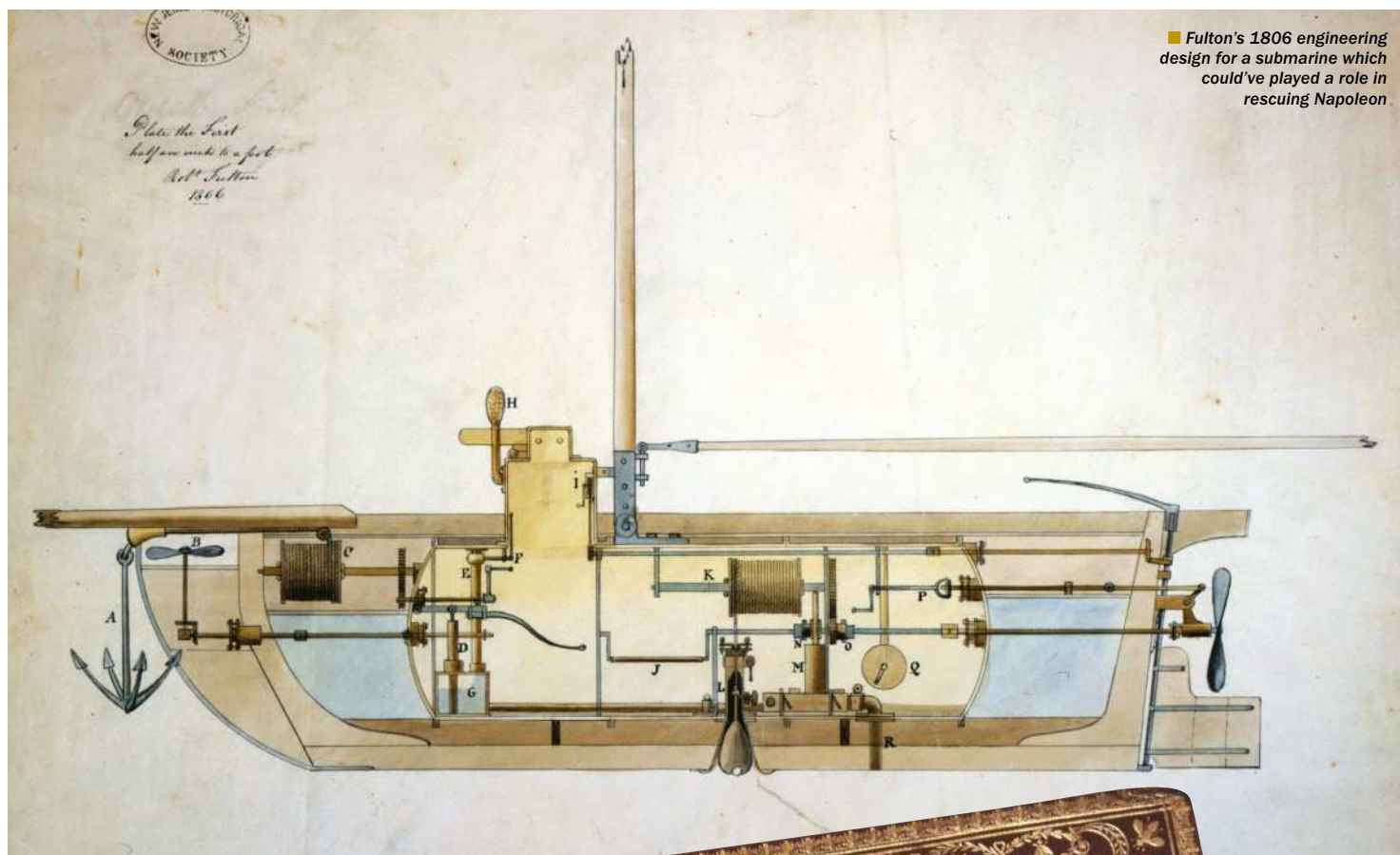
NEW EMPIRE IN SOUTH AMERICA

South America was another popular destination for Napoleonic exiles. Many of them joined the patriot fighting for independence from Spain. General Berton de la Haye, who had a brilliant career in Napoleon's army, briefly commanded the cavalry in Chile's independence army. He allegedly lent his support to the plan disclosed by Raoul. Napoleon learned that Joseph had safely reached the United States, he said, "If I were in his place, I would create a great empire in all of Spanish America." In 1817, he unfolded his maps of South America on the table at Longwood and told General Gourgaud, "I would be so happy in Buenos Aires!" Several of the rescue expeditions to rescue Napoleon were based in Buenos Aires, which was then the only major South American port not under European control. If Napoleon had managed to start a new empire, South America would have had the freest hand.

Naples, Spain, Portugal, Cherbourg

Buenos Aires

New Orleans, Champ d'Asile, Alabama, Bordertown, Mississippi River, Ohio River

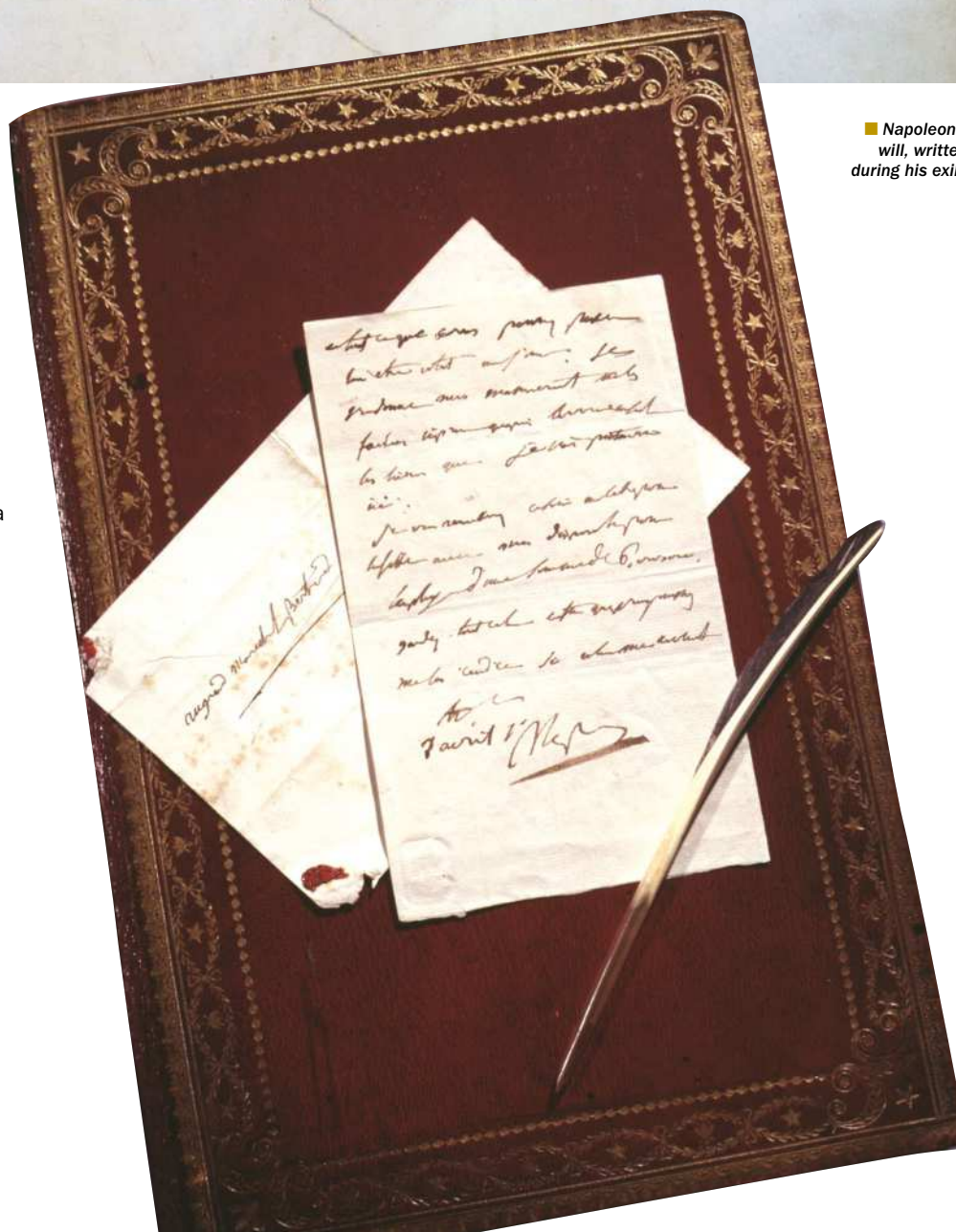


■ Fulton's 1806 engineering design for a submarine which could've played a role in rescuing Napoleon

anything where concealment or disguise or bodily exertion was required. If he was not able to walk on board the ship with hat on his head and his sword at his side, he would take no measures to go."

Another companion, General Gaspard Gourgaud, told the Russian commissioner to St Helena, Count Balmain, that Napoleon could "go to America whenever he wishes." When Balmain asked why Napoleon hadn't done so, Gourgaud replied, "However unhappy he is here, he secretly enjoys the sense of importance which is evident in his being guarded so closely and the constant interest which all the European Powers take in him. Several times he has told us: 'I cannot live as a private personage. I would rather be a prisoner than to be free in the United States.'" According to Montholon, Napoleon feared he would be assassinated or forgotten if he went to the United States. He also entertained hopes that an eventual change of government in London or Paris would end his captivity. He told Gourgaud, "When Louis XVIII dies, great events may take place; and if Lord Holland should then be Prime Minister of England, they may bring me back to Europe. But what I most hope for is the death of the Prince Regent, which will place the young Princess Charlotte on the English throne. She will bring me back to Europe."

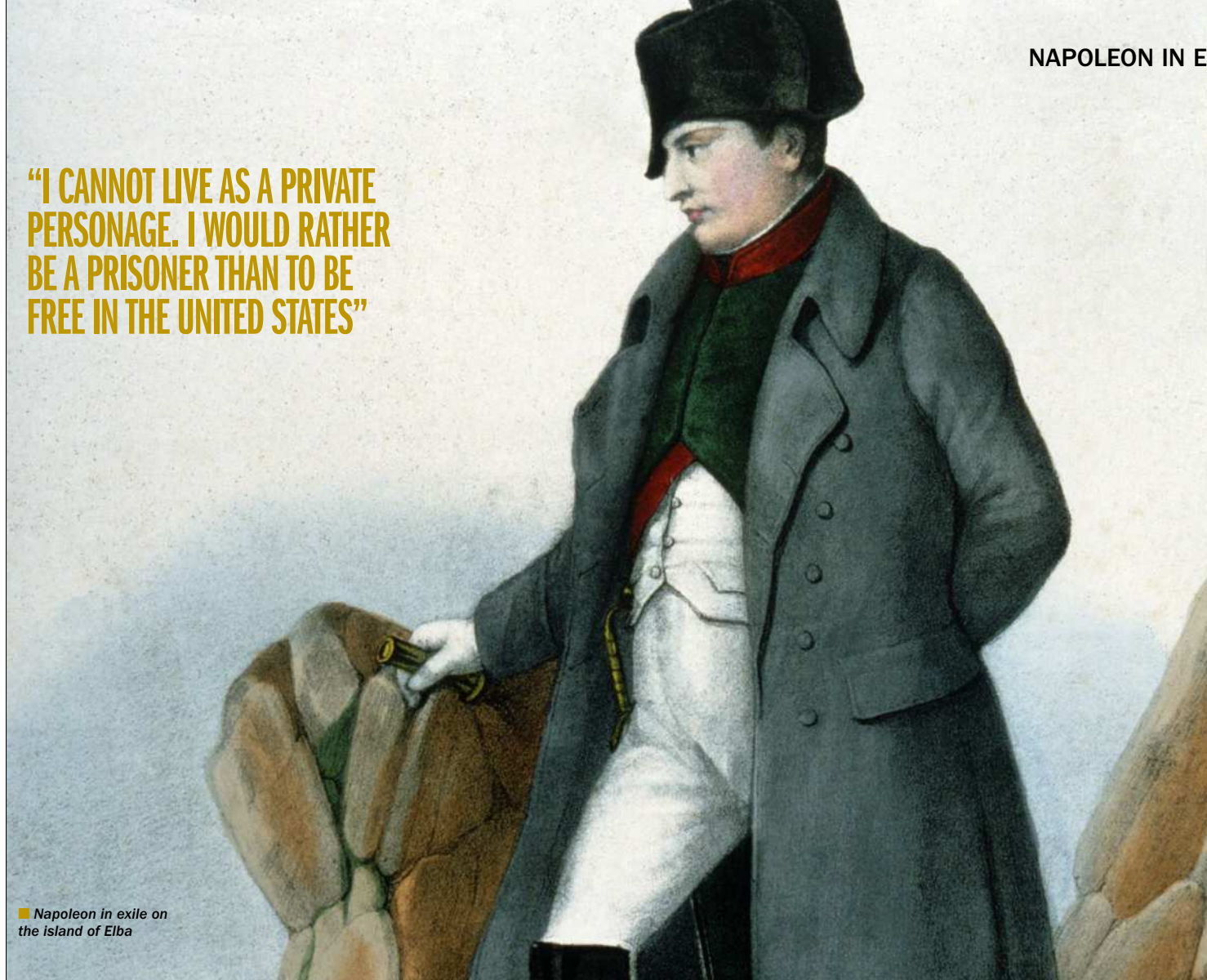
Napoleon died on St Helena on 5 May 1821 at the age of 51. His body finally did make it off the island, 19 years later, when it was repatriated to France and laid to rest in Les Invalides in Paris.



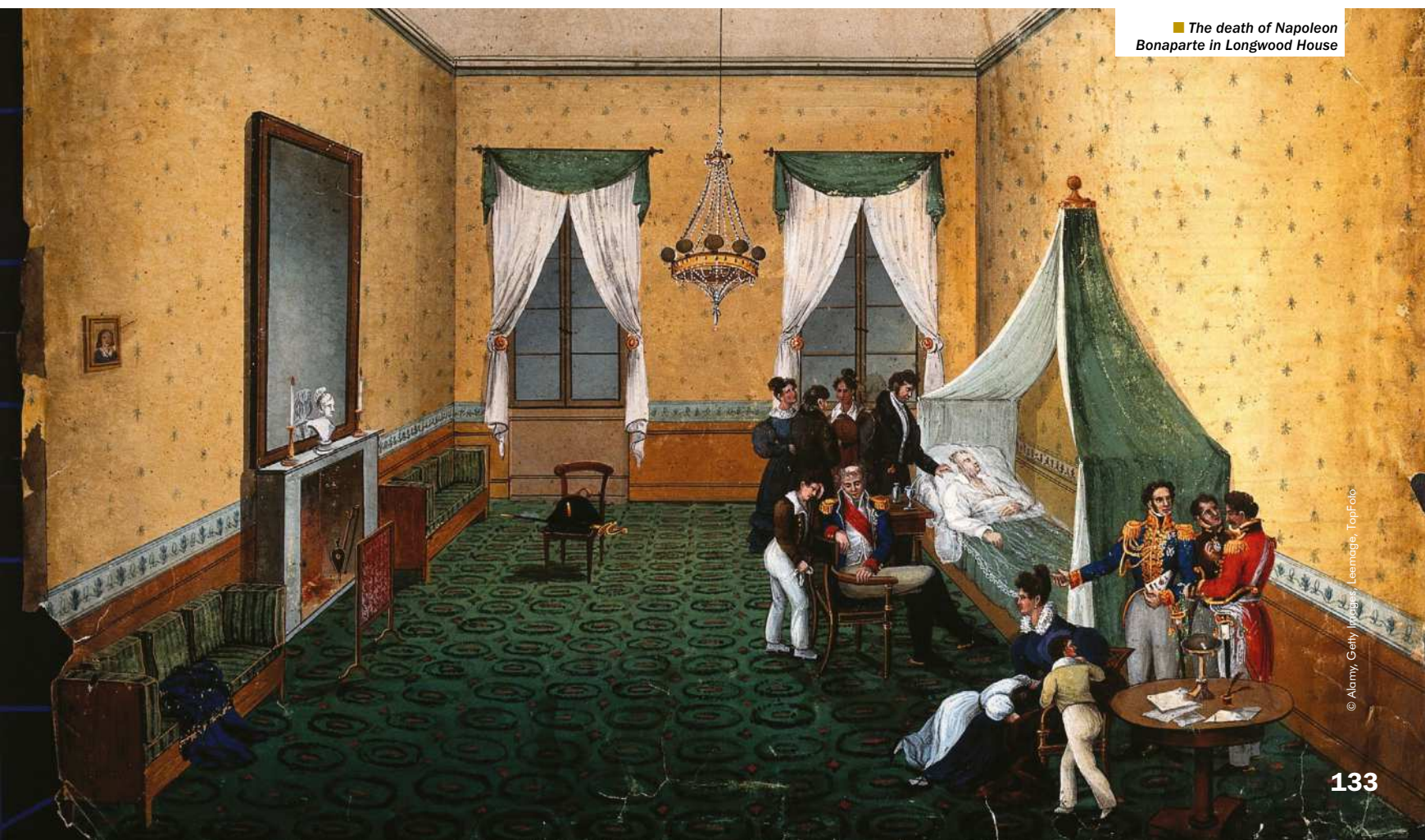
■ Napoleon's will, written during his exile

"I CANNOT LIVE AS A PRIVATE PERSONAGE. I WOULD RATHER BE A PRISONER THAN TO BE FREE IN THE UNITED STATES"

■ Napoleon in exile on the island of Elba



■ The death of Napoleon Bonaparte in Longwood House



WHAT IF... NAPOLEON HAD WON THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO?

IT'S ONE OF HISTORY'S GREAT HYPOTHETICALS, BUT WOULD A FRENCH VICTORY AT WATERLOO REALLY HAVE CHANGED THE COURSE OF HISTORY? WE ASKED A PAIR OF EXPERTS TO GIVE THEIR VIEWS

What would have happened if Napoleon had won the Battle of Waterloo?

Alan Forrest: He would certainly have taken Brussels and he might have tried to advance toward the boundary of the Rhine and Scheldt. But there was no possibility of long-term success. He would surely have gone on to lose within weeks or months, because although the British, Dutch, Belgians and Prussians were involved at Waterloo, neither the Austrians nor the Russians were, and they had armies of 150,000 to 200,000 waiting in the wings. In particular, the Tsar wanted Napoleon destroyed: he didn't believe Europe could remain at peace if Napoleon remained at large.

Mark Adkin: I wouldn't have thought [that Napoleon would have enjoyed success for] more than a few weeks. If he had won the battle, Wellington would have withdrawn what was left of his army and Napoleon would have had to hurry back to Paris. The Allies would have waited until the Austrians and Russians had arrived and the British and Prussians had recovered, then would have teamed up together. Napoleon wouldn't have had much chance at all.

"THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER IS THAT THE FRENCH PEOPLE WERE WAR-WEARY IN 1815; THEY WANTED PEACE ABOVE ALL ELSE AND FEW BELIEVED NAPOLEON COULD DELIVER THAT"

Why did Napoleon lose at Waterloo?

Adkin: Napoleon had a big problem because he was surrounded by various countries that were desperate to get rid of him. There were four main threats once he established himself back in Paris: The Anglo-Dutch Army under Wellington in Belgium, the Prussians under Blücher in Germany, the Russians under Barclay De Tolly, and the Austrians under Schwarzenberg. That's nearly half a million men under arms and they all planned to converge on Paris. The only way he could possibly win was to make the maximum use of the time it was going to take Russians and the Austrians and so on to get there. While they were marching, he had to deal with the others, in particular Wellington and Blücher. He wanted to defeat the Prussians at Ligny, while Wellington was held off by a smaller force. Once the Prussians were defeated, he could turn the combined strength on Wellington. He succeeded partially at Ligny – his strategy worked and he split the two Allies, turned on the Prussians and defeated them, but he didn't crush them. He let them withdraw and recover. That was a mistake. Napoleon allowed them to withdraw north instead of east, and by withdrawing north they were able to turn and then rejoin Wellington's forces.

Forrest: Napoleon had no possibility of finding large numbers of additional soldiers because he was now reliant on the French population alone, and while he was on Elba, France had abolished conscription. As long as the Allies could unite their forces against him, he was hopelessly outnumbered, and his failure to drive home his advantage after Ligny proved to be a fatal mistake.

So if Napoleon had stopped the Prussians at Ligny, he would have defeated the British at Waterloo?

Adkin: Wellington knew the Prussians were coming; he had been promised that they were coming, which is the actual reason why he stood at Waterloo and defended that bridge. If he knew the Prussians were not coming, then he would probably have withdrawn until he could join the Prussians and therefore the battle would not have taken place, not there anyway. So the crucial thing is the Prussians and their arrival clinched it [the battle].

Did the people of France support Napoleon's return from Elba?

Forrest: The most important thing to remember is that the French people were war-weary in 1815; they wanted peace above all else and few believed Napoleon could deliver that. On the other hand, there was no enthusiasm for the Bourbons and certainly no desire to go back to the Ancien Régime. The fear was that the Bourbons would try to restore the kind of aristocratic and clerical authority that had existed previously. Napoleon had surrounded himself with luxury and riches at the height of the empire, but when he returned from Elba in 1815 he sought to present himself as the little corporal of the army who had risen through talent to be its commander, but who remained essentially a man of the people, true to the ideals of the Revolution of 1789. This proved a clever tactic.

Adkin: Most of the old soldiers were tremendously loyal to Napoleon. Napoleon had raised the standing of the ordinary French soldier during all those campaigns. He was extremely generous and gave them good pay. When he came back from Elba, I think thousands of these men, who had been thrown out of the army by the Bourbons coming back, had nothing and were no longer the number-one citizens like they used to be, so they rejoined Napoleon in their thousands.



ALAN FORREST



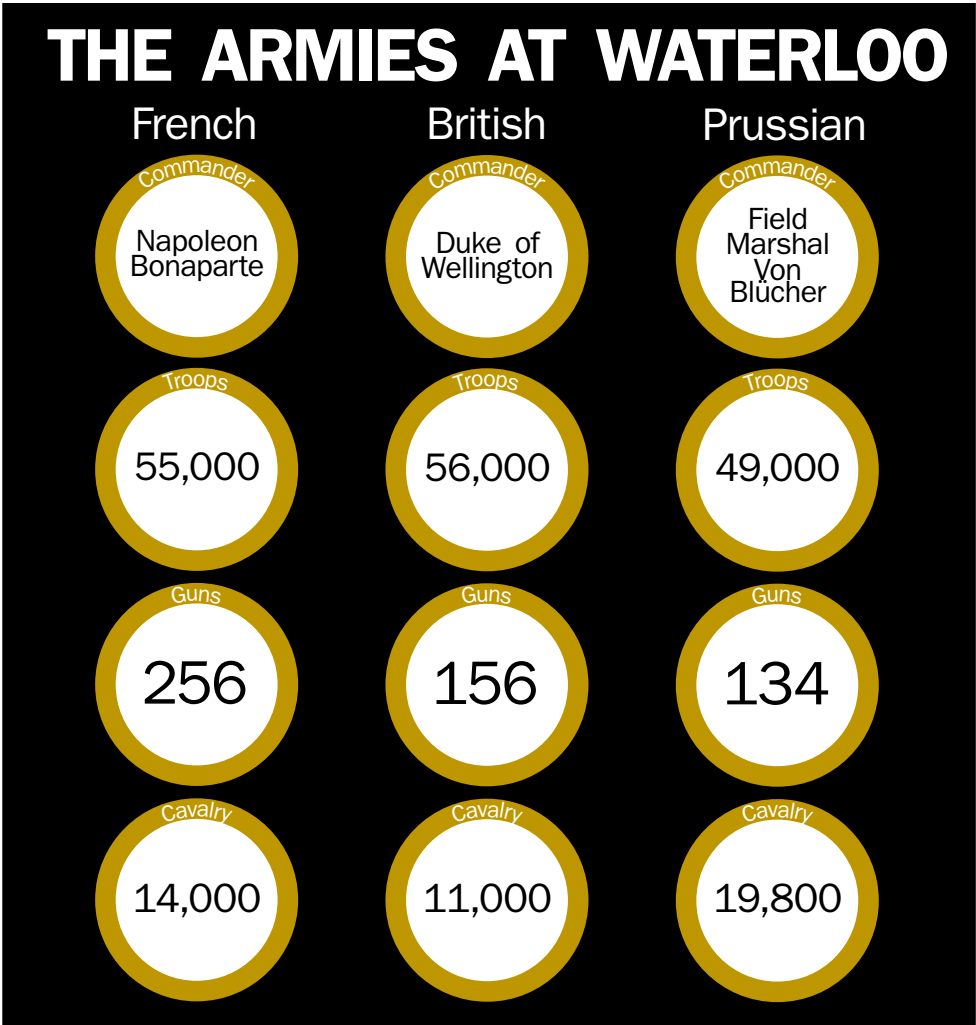
Alan Forrest is emeritus professor of modern history at the University of York. He has written widely on French revolutionary and Napoleonic history. His books include *Napoleon's Men: The Soldiers Of The Revolution And Empire*, and a biography simply called *Napoleon*. He has also authored a book on the Battle of Waterloo for Oxford University Publishing's Great Battles series, released for the battle's bicentenary in 2015.

MARK ADKIN



Mark Adkin is a military historian who took up writing after serving in the British Army for 18 years and over ten years working in the Colonial Service in the Pacific. He is the author of *The Waterloo Companion: The Complete Guide To World's Most Famous Land Battle*, and has more recently written *The Western Front Companion*. He also wrote *The Sharpe Companion*, which placed Bernard Cornwell's Sharpe novels in historical content.

■ Even if Napoleon had won at Waterloo it is likely Paris would have been taken and the great general would have been executed



“MOST OF THE OLD SOLDIERS WERE TREMENDOUSLY LOYAL TO NAPOLEON [...] HE GAVE THEM GOOD PAY”

If he promised to abandon his imperial ambitions, could Napoleon have negotiated to stay in power in France rather than the Allies restoring the Bourbons again?

Adkin: He tried to at the beginning, after escaping from Elba. He tried then to convince the European powers he wanted to avoid war and that he renounced all claims to Belgium, Holland, Germany and Poland. He was unsuccessful, of course.

Forrest: This was never realistic. Russia wouldn't allow it and I'm not sure that Britain would, either. Britain did, however, want France to remain a viable European power since it was an important part of the balance of power structure on which peace depended. Britain was aware of the possibility of a rampant nationalistic Prussia and was very aware of the threat posed by Russia, especially in the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean. Britain particularly needed to maintain lines of communication with India. Remember that Britain was an emerging global power in 1815 and that the Russians were aware of that. So they needed to protect France's position, but that also meant that they had to be sure France would be a responsible member of the international community. For that reason they had to get rid of Napoleon. It didn't really matter who else was there, the Bourbons would do, but they were sure that they did not want Napoleon to play that role.

If they wouldn't accept him as a ruler of France, would the Allies still have gone down the route of exiling Napoleon to St Helena, potentially running the risk him escaping again?

Forrest: Napoleon himself was much more terrified after Waterloo of falling into the hands of the Bourbons, who might have done just that. He chose to surrender to the English in

HOW WOULD IT BE DIFFERENT?





■ Napoleon was exiled to the Italian island of Elba but returned to Paris and declared himself emperor

the hope that he would be allowed to live as a prisoner under house arrest in England; in other words, the British would treat him decently, with a modicum of respect. As we know, the British rejected that option and exiled him to St Helena, a remote island in the South Atlantic, far removed from Europe, from which there was little possibility he could escape. In France he could have faced a trial for treason and possible execution, as happened with Michel Ney and others of

Napoleon's loyal lieutenants. But that course was not without its dangers. The regime would have risked turning Napoleon into a political martyr and, given the devotion in which he was held by his followers, it surely would have got one. I think you could make the point that the Allies had to deal with Napoleon a little delicately in 1815, because there was a real danger that they would create a martyr, in the process dividing French opinion and risking lasting instability.

If France did destabilise and wasn't able to balance power in Europe, how would this change history?

Forrest: Britain becomes the dominant world power of the 19th century, which is what did happen anyway. The next challenge, except for the colonial wars in China and so on, is going to be the Crimean War, which essentially means that the balance of power that was established along with events in 1815 more or less holds.

● **Wellington defeats Napoleon**
Napoleon attempts to wipe out Wellington's centre troops with attacks before the Prussians arrive. However, he engages too late after waiting for the ground to dry and Blücher arrives. Napoleon retreats.
19 June 1815

● **Paris turns on Napoleon**
Napoleon returns to the capital in defeat three days after Waterloo to find the public no longer support national resistance. While his brother Lucien believes he can still seize power by dissolving the parliament, Napoleon senses the change and abdicates his throne in favour of his son.
22 June 1815

● **Napoleon sent to St Helena**
Napoleon is banished to the remote island of St Helena without any of the perks he enjoyed on Elba. He dies of natural causes in 1821.
23 October 1815

● **Michel Ney executed**
Napoleon's long-time ally and marshal at the Battle of Waterloo, Michel Ney is executed as a warning to Napoleon's supporters.
7 December 1815

● **Austro-Russian invasion**
The Austrian and Russian armies combined siege of Paris overwhelms the French, with Barclay de Tolly drawing on his experiences of capturing the city in 1814.
July 1815

● **Hundred Days ends**
After the president of the provisional government intimates he should leave Paris, Napoleon exits the capital. Soon after Graf von Zieten's Prussian I Corps enters Paris and defeat the French. Louis XIII is restored.
8 July 1815

● **Napoleon surrenders**
After the British Navy blocks his attempt to take a ship to America, Napoleon surrenders himself to Captain Frederick Maitland of HMS Bellerophon and is transported to England.
15 July 1815

● **Emperor again**
Returning to Paris, Napoleon is unopposed as he dissolves parliament and assumes dictatorial powers to better defend Paris from any assaults.
21 June 1815

● **Napoleon executed**
After his surrender the Allies allow Louis XVIII to execute Napoleon as they believe he is a threat to Europe's peace. However, the move divides France and Napoleon becomes a martyr.
July 1815

● **The Bonaparte Spring**
Bonapartists inspired by Napoleon's promises of constitutional reform during his Hundred Days are outraged at his execution and protest against Bourbon rule in Paris.
15 July 1815

● **Outbreak of civil war**
Disillusioned Napoleonic generals and officials seize on pro-Bonaparte feeling amongst the masses to make a grab for power. Events escalate and civil war erupts across France.
September 1815

● **Rise of the British Empire**
Britain seizes abandoned French colonies and with a self-destructing France unable to balance European power, the Crimean War between Britain and Russia is possibly hastened.
Mid-19th century

WATERLOO: THE HINGE OF THE 19TH CENTURY

NAPOLEON'S DEFEAT USHERED IN AN ERA OF PEACE IN EUROPE AND SAW GREAT BRITAIN ESTABLISH ITS HEGEMONY. THE BATTLE HAS PASSED INTO OUR VERNACULAR TOO...

Though the allied victory on 18 June 1815 was almost immediately recognised across Europe as a watershed moment, the participants in the battle could not at first agree on its title. The Prussian Field Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher was much taken with the romantic ideal of the 'La Belle Alliance' and upon the very night of Napoleon's defeat suggested this as the battle's name.

It caught the imagination of the Prussian empire, prompting officials to change the name of Berlin's most prominent public space to 'Belle-Alliance-Platz', while the 'Battle of the Belle Alliance' featured in German history books well into the 20th century.

The French, however, preferred a different designation. To some, it became known as the Battle of Soignies, named after the region in which it was fought. A whole host of Parisian publications, meanwhile, referred to this particular battle as the Day of Mont-Saint-Jean, a name that was favoured by Napoleon himself.

Mont Saint-Jean, of course, recalled the French cavalry attacks on the British infantry squares on the reverse slope of the escarpment at the height of the battle. This is the name for the battle that was employed by Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables*, which was published in 1862.

During the course of battle, the French Field Marshal Jean-de-Dieu Soult used the title 'Battle of Waterloo' in one of his dispatches and this was echoed by Wellington himself, who sent his victory dispatch from the village of Waterloo. Waterloo is the name that Wellington preferred, deeming it an easier word for his British troops to pronounce in their native tongue, and this is the name that has passed into history.

That Wellington's name preference emerged victorious is testimony to Britain's emergence as a world superpower in the wake of Napoleon's defeat. For the Battle of Waterloo was a true turning point that changed the course of history. Even the French writer Hugo, a proud advocate

of the Napoleonic dream, and a man who referred to the battlefield as a “dismal plain”, conceded that, “Waterloo is the hinge of the nineteenth century.” Its aftermath still echoes in the modern world.

BRITAIN'S HEGEMONY AFFIRMED

The second half of the 18th century had proved a bitter and bloody power tussle between Britain and France, with the latter widely regarded as Europe's true superpower. France was driven from North America in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) but had its revenge when it allied with George Washington and defeated Britain in the American War of Independence (1775-1783).

The Revolutionary Wars followed and these dominated Europe until the Battle of Waterloo. Napoleon's defeat brought these conflicts to a conclusion and ensured Britain's hegemony in Europe as she used her naval power to become a dominant imperial giant.

The Congress of Vienna divided many of France's imperial possessions among the European states, while others returned to their previous owners.

Britain took possession of the Cape Colony in Southern Africa, Tobago, Ceylon, and a number of other colonies in Africa and Asia. Britain then demonstrated great strategic acumen by employing them as staging points to expand and control its rapidly burgeoning empire.

While Britain's power grew on a global scale, in Europe the battle ushered in a period of extended peace and prosperity, known in many quarters as Pax Britannia (the Latin for British Peace). With French unruly power finally neutered, the Royal Navy ruled the waves and her foreign policy focused largely on ensuring a stable political climate in Europe. After all, only with an effective network of European alliances could Britain concentrate on expanding her global empire.

Nine hours of bloodshed near the Belgian town of Waterloo changed the course of history forever

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Though Britain prospered greatly in the aftermath of Waterloo, 'La Belle Alliance' so beloved of Blücher, also did much to lay the foundations for both NATO and the United Nations. As evidenced elsewhere in this book, only around 36 per cent of Wellington's army was British, with the rest comprised of Belgian and Dutch troops, as well as soldiers from a number of German duchies.

NATO AND THE UNITED NATIONS

In addition, no one can overlook the achievements of Blücher's 50,000-strong Prussian army. Indeed, the conglomeration of European power poured onto the Belgian battlefield prompted the British field marshal and former chief of the defence staff, Lord Bramall, to dub Waterloo, "The first NATO operation."

The United Nations, too, can trace its history back to the battle. When Winston Churchill spoke of the allies' intentions in the wake of Pearl Harbor, he lifted a phrase from stanza 34 in Lord Byron's poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which was published not long after Wellington's victory. "Here," the poet wrote, "where the sword united nations drew..." The term was eventually used to name the UN.

If it provided a foundation stone for both these multi-national organisations, Waterloo also had further implications for the future of Europe. In the modern-day climate, with Brexit looming and dissent among many quarters of the European Union, some might look back to Waterloo, which as well as a physical battle also proved a conflict of political ideals. Napoleon hoped to establish a



■ The Congress of Vienna in 1815

single state across the continent of Europe with himself ruling at its head. The allies, meanwhile, fought for the freedom of the nation state. Through the latter half of the 20th century, many thinkers and politicians advocated the formation of a European state, though Brexit and the current political climate across much of Europe suggests that this will not come to fruition in the near future.

Another legacy of Waterloo was the role of the Prussian army and the impact of its success

on the Prussian state. The Prussian army's belligerence towards the French in the aftermath of the battle, and its desire to wrestle back contested territory ultimately strengthened national feeling. Prussia then soon considered itself to be the natural leader of a united Germany. The later formation of the German Empire in 1871 and a tragically ill-fated abuse of power eventually led to the First World War and the subsequent rise of the Nazi Party during the 1930s and the Second World War.

WATERLOO STATION

Of all the memorials to the famous battle, London's Waterloo station is perhaps the most famous. London & South Western Railway built the original station back in 1848 on an extension of the mainline from Nine Elms Railway station, which was the main London Terminus in the 1830s. It expanded in size throughout the 19th and 20th centuries and was refurbished shortly after the millennium. It is currently used by almost 90 million passengers a year, making it the busiest railway station in the United Kingdom. It is also the country's largest station, covering just shy of 25 acres.

In 1994, construction began on new platforms to house the Eurostar service, connecting the UK to Europe, and this prompted an angry reaction from a number of French politicians. Florent Longuepée wrote to British Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1998 claiming that it was upsetting for the French to be reminded of Napoleon's defeat when arriving in London. Though sensitive to his claims, the British government retained the station's name. The issue dissolved, however, when the interchange station was closed down in 2007 and the Eurostar services were transferred to St. Pancras upon the opening of a high-speed rail system.

■ Currently the UK's largest and busiest station, Waterloo was opened on 11 July 1848





Equally far-reaching was the impact of the battle on America's future. The United States had benefitted greatly from the conflict between Britain and France, using the discord to assert their independence. As the US's economy grew and peace reigned, for a while at least in Europe, it's grain and cotton, among other exports, safely travelled the Atlantic and boosted their economic standing in the world. It was not long before the US then emerged as the Western world's greatest super-power and formidable opponent.

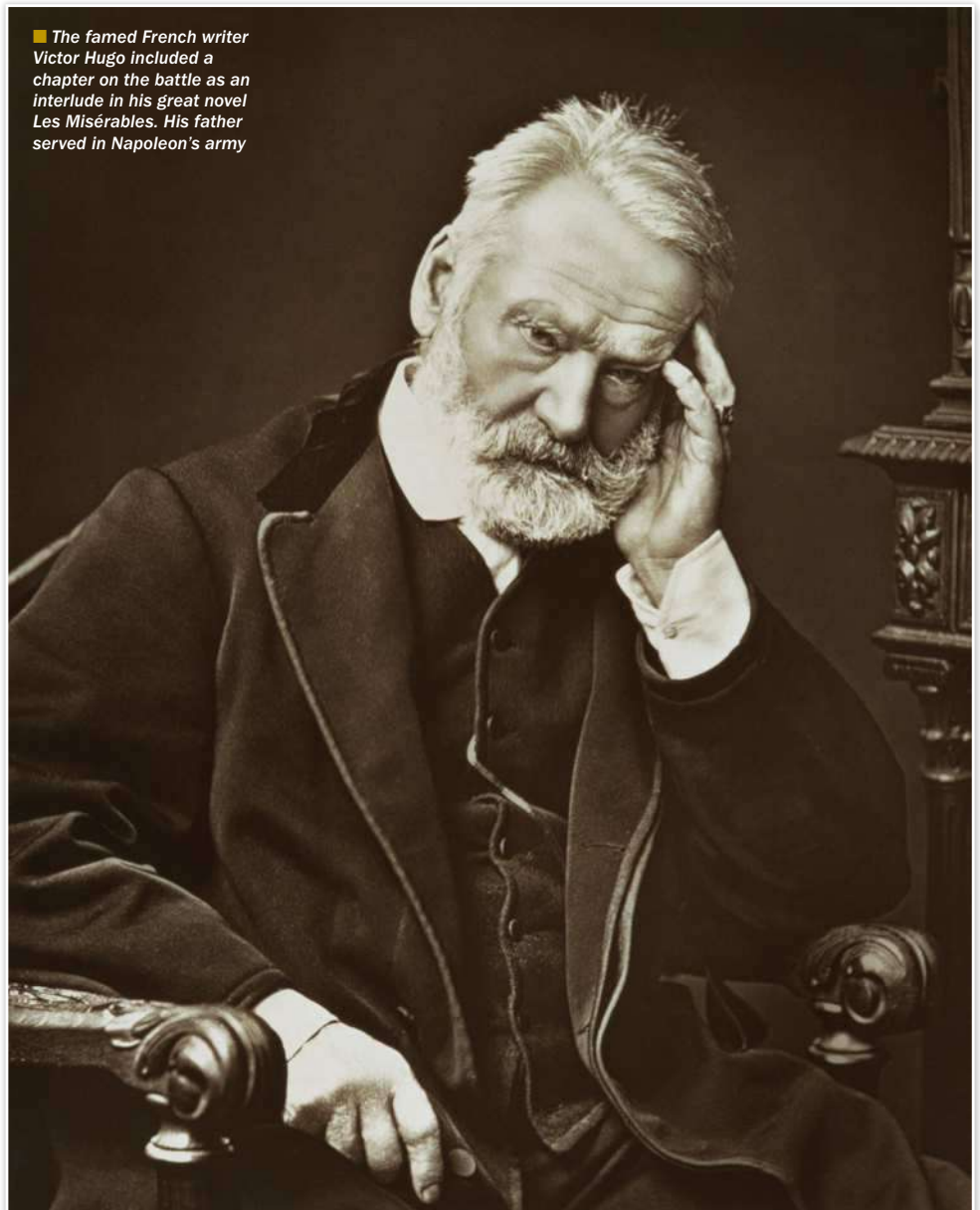
WATERLOO IN POPULAR CULTURE

Even today, Waterloo lives among our everyday lives in many forms. A number of memorials sprang up across the country in the wake of the battle, with London's famed railway station arguably the most notable. The battle also lives in our vernacular, courtesy of the US reformer and abolitionist Wendell Phillips who, during a speech delivered in Brooklyn in 1859, declared, 'Every man meets his Waterloo at last.' This phrase is still current today.

Another famous quote, often misattributed to Wellington, refers to the battle being won on the playing fields of Eton. However, this appears to come from the pen of George Orwell, who declared in *The Lion and the Unicorn* (1941), "Probably the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton, but the opening battles of all subsequent wars have been lost there."

The battle features in a whole host of novels, appearing as an interlude in Victor Hugo's

■ The famed French writer Victor Hugo included a chapter on the battle as an interlude in his great novel *Les Misérables*. His father served in Napoleon's army



"A NUMBER OF MEMORIALS SPRANG UP ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN THE WAKE OF THE BATTLE, WITH LONDON'S FAMED RAILWAY STATION ARGUABLY THE MOST NOTABLE"

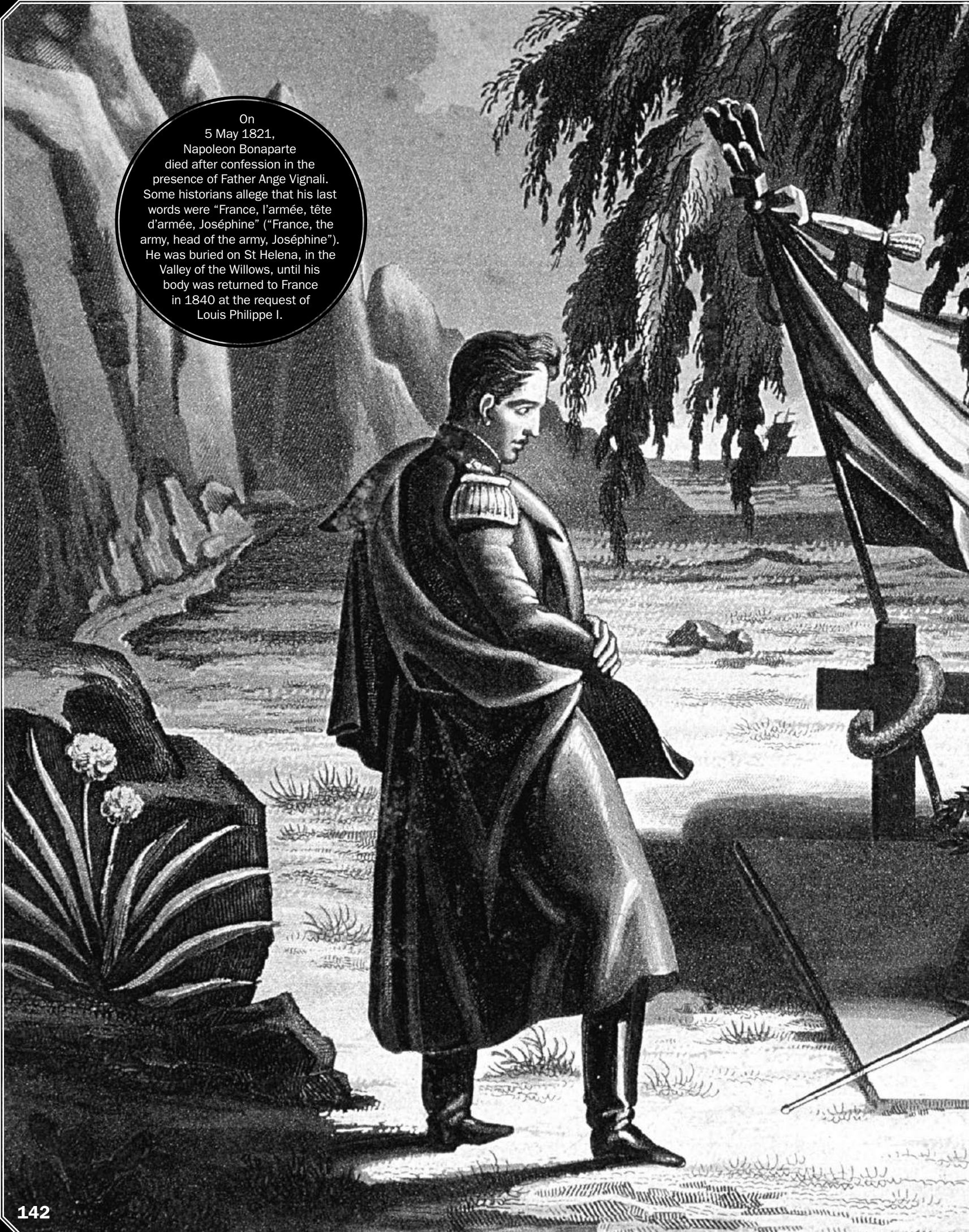
Les Misérables, and also in several chapters of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848). *Sherlock Holmes'* creator, Arthur Conan Doyle, includes a chapter containing two short stories in his novel *The Adventures of Gerard* (1903), titled 'How the Brigadier Bore Himself at Waterloo'.

There are many more literary examples harking back to the Battle of Waterloo, including Winston Graham's penultimate book in the *Poldark* series, *The Twisted Sword* (1990), which deals extensively with the fictional family members' involvement in the battle, while Bernard Cornwell's *Sharpe's Waterloo* (1990), the 11th and final novel in his *Sharpe* series, sets his hero among the staff of the real-life Prince of Orange. This story also forms part of the TV series adapted for ITV, which featured Sean Bean as Sharpe.

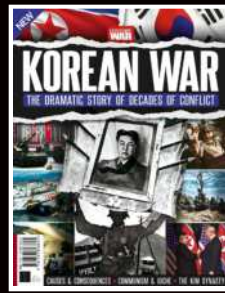
There is a whole host of documentary and drama TV shows and films focused on Waterloo, as well as a number of board games and video games. The battle has been remembered by musicians, too, with the likes of Stonewall Jackson, the Bee Gees, The Kinks (probably referring to the train station), Iced Earth, Running Wild and The Libertines (unreleased) all incorporating the word into modern song titles.

Of course, by far the most celebrated song is Abba's *Waterloo*, with which the Swedish pop stars won the 1974 Eurovision Song Contest. The lyrics run as "My, my, at Waterloo Napoleon did surrender. Oh yeah, and I have met my destiny in quite a similar way." Not surprisingly, Abba named their first international album release after their hit single, and the name of the great battle still rings out over the airwaves to this day.

On
5 May 1821,
Napoleon Bonaparte
died after confession in the
presence of Father Ange Vignali.
Some historians allege that his last
words were "France, l'armée, tête
d'armée, Joséphine" ("France, the
army, head of the army, Joséphine").
He was buried on St Helena, in the
Valley of the Willows, until his
body was returned to France
in 1840 at the request of
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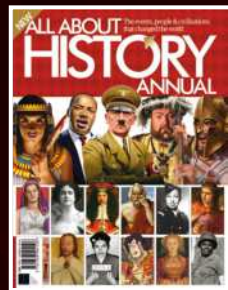
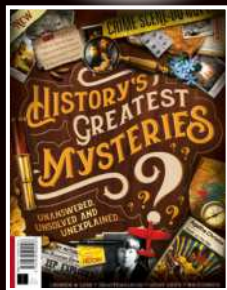
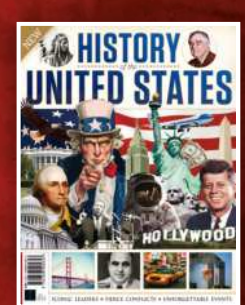
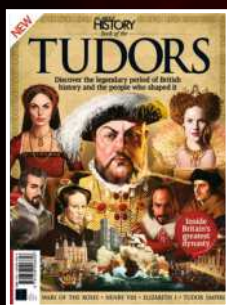


Chart the rise of Hitler and learn how he set Germany on the path to war



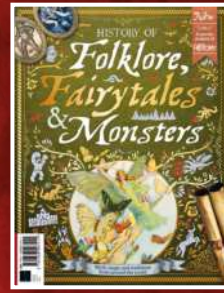
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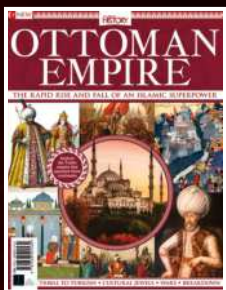
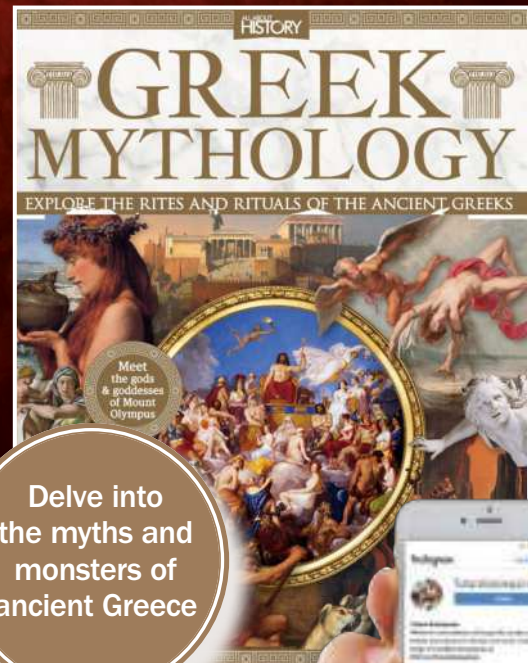


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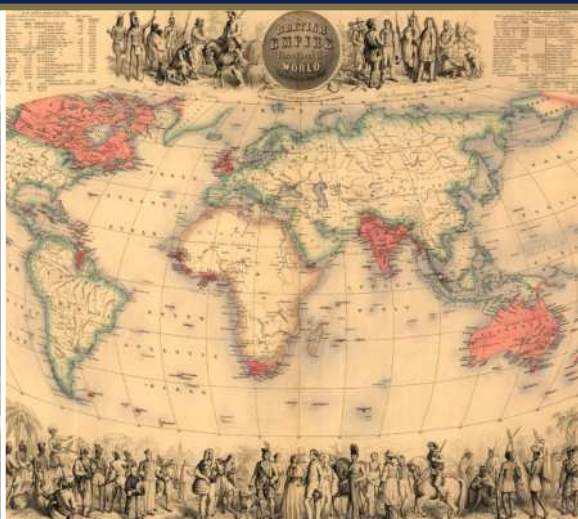
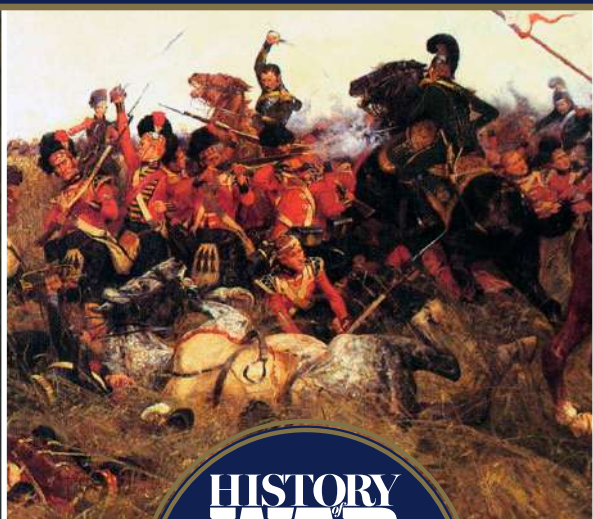
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